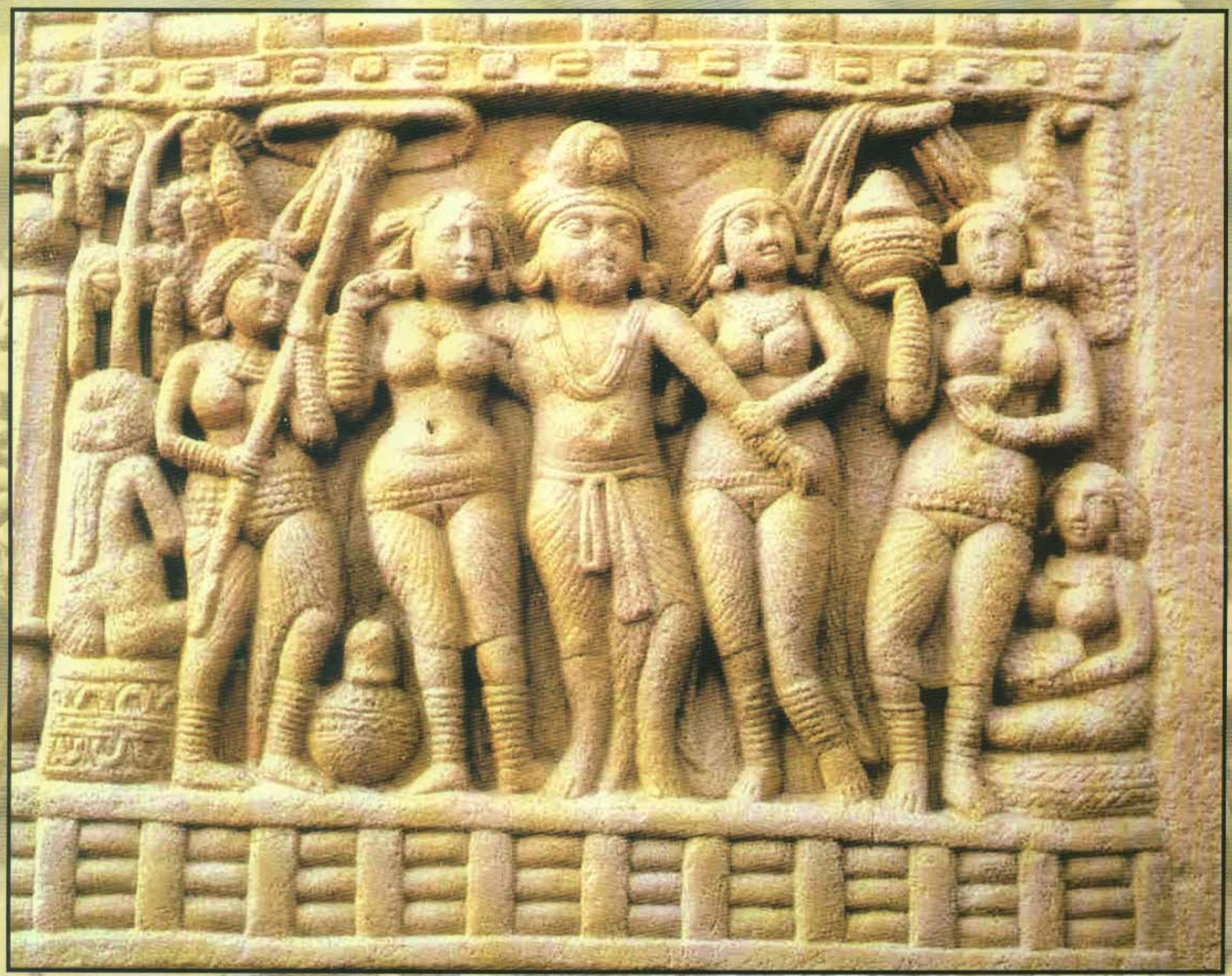
BUDDHIST ART

Sanchi to early Mathura

Set of 2 Volumes



Archana Asthana
Ashwani Asthana

BUDDHIST ART

Sanchi to early Mathura

VOLUME I

Archana Asthana
Ashwani Asthana

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Foreword

It is my pleasure that two of my former students Dr. Archana and Dr. Ashwani Asthanahave produced this well researched book titled "Buddhist Art : Sanchi to Early Mathura" covering the age of evolution and early development of art and architecture of Buddhist panthcon and the period of transition from Sunga to Kushan age when a paradigm shift in conceptualisation and execution took pace and the abstract nature as well as symbolism in art moved towards realism as per the demand of the time and also influences of folk art traditions combined with foreign art styles due to close interaction, As such the local traditions of Yaksha worship and technical execution influenced by the Hellenistic art influenced the art of the phase. The scholar couple have successfully analysed details of both the phases of early Buddist Art of India which paved the way to reach to the stage of future classicism. The transitional phase had to pass through a phenomenon in which conceptualisation of iconometry and iconography was researched by contemporary scholars, artists and implementing authorities with approval of the monastic standard canonical discipline.

The exposition of the transitional phse is explicit in the iconography of anthropomorphic evolution of Buddist art as well as in the architecture of stupas, shrines and monastic embellishments. The artists received directions fom the tradition of Buddhist, Brahamanical and Jaina panthcons and from various Buddhist councils which determined the way of life for both monks and laity and decided about the patterns of worship as well Archaeological material belonging to the phase under study in forms of sculptures and structures confirm the developments which tok place during the formative years of their tangible art which gave birth to different schools of art in India in coming years and thus influencing the art and architecture of various regions of Asia where Buddhism became popula later, I am sure this well researched work would prove very much informative for both researchers and general readers. I wish the authors all success.

15th July, 2016

(B. R. Mani)

Acknowledgements

Above all, we owe great debt to late Dr. S. P. Gupta, former Chairman of Indian Archaeological Society and our teacher,who guided us in every aspect to this endeavor, without his help this work would have never been possible. His invaluable insights, perceptive criticisms and rigorous supervision were a source of guidance and inspiration.

We both are deeply grateful to late Shri M. C. Joshi, late Shri J. P. Joshi, both former Director Generals of Archaeological Survey of India, late Prof. R.C. Sharma, former Director General of National Museum Institute; they were the great source of encouragement and inspiration and were always approachable whenever required. Their time to time suggestions and views have been extremely helpful in perusing this research work.

Our special and sincere thanks are due to Dr. B.R. Mani former, Additional Director General of Archaeological Survey of India, for his generous and learned insight that have aided us in many aspects of this studyand for going through the manuscript of the book and for writing the foreword, as per his advice all said corrections has been carried out with utmost care. We are also thankful to him in various administrative matters. We also wish to acknowledge our sincere thanks to Dr. R.K. Tiwari, Director General of Archaeological Survey of India for extending us every possible help in academic aspects.

We are also grateful to the librarians and staff members of the following libraries: National Museum Library; New Delhi, Slide Library, National Museum Institute; New Delhi, Central Library of Archaeological Survey of India; New Delhi, American Institute of Indian Studies Library; Gurgoan, Haryana, Library of Indian Centre of Historical Research; New Delhi and Library of Indian Museum, Kolkata.

Our special thanks are also due to the Directors, curators and staff members of various Central and State Archaeological Museums for helping us in various ways during our visits for collecting the data and photographs for the present book, such as site Museums of Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Varanasi, Vaishali, Sanchi, of Archaeological Survey of India, National Museum, New Delhi. State Museums of Mathura, Lucknow and Vidisha; University Museum Allahabad, Bharat Kala Bhawan Banaras Hindu University; Varanasi and Indian Museum, Kolkata.

The constant and unconditional support of Smt. Shyama Asthana, has been invaluable in various ways such as typing, photography and editing of the present research work. We also owe a great debt to the world renowned Kathak Dancers Ms. Nalini and Kamalini (Delhi Sisters) for extending their help in immense ways. My religious Guru and Kathak Acharya, Guru Jitendra Maharaj has always blessed us with moral support whenever, we have loosen our heart.

We are also grateful to our young ones Mr. Rishabh Asthana and Monish Asthana for taking long naps and being patient and forbearing while their mother and father worked on this research work.

We are also grateful to our departed parents Late Shri Bhagwan Prasad Asthana, Late Smt. Geeta Dubey and Late Shri Krishan Kumar Dubey, their untimely death during our period of research work not only shaken us, but provided us an inspiration to achieve our academic goals, as they have always inspired us to work hard with honesty.

Last, but not the least we are very much thankful to Shri Praveen Mittal Ji of Buddhist World Press, for insisting us to complete the work and submitting the proofs in time for publication, his brotherly approach and personal act in this regard is appreciable.

Archana Asthana

Ashwani Asthana

Preface

The working on the present book "*Buddhist Art: Sanchi to Early Mathura*" in fact started long back in our mind, when we were on tour to the Buddhist sites and Museums of India alongwith other archaeological sites. Once, we discussed some of our thoughts about the development, transformation and evolution of Śuṅga art to Kuṣāṇa art and their interrelating art features with our teachers of Art and Archaeology, Late Dr. S.P. Gupta, Late Shri. J.P. Joshi, Late Shri, M.C. Joshi, Late Shri R.C. Mishra, Dr. B.R. Mani. All expressed one thing saying "*Is it possible to trace in realm*"? "*If you feel so, both of you start research on these issues.*"

We humbly approached Dr. B.R. Mani for detailed discussions on the various issues pertaining to the subject, and for seeking his suggestions and guidance. The conspicuous question which emerged at the end of the discussion was that, how far the early Buddhist art of Sanchi and Mathura in light of other centers, keeping in mind the literary, inscriptional and numismatic evidences will unfold the process of the growth, development and transformation of Buddhist sculptural art in Mathura, Sanchi and elsewhere in light of religious, political and administrative developments?

We started working on the topic as per his guidance and advice on the issue by presenting and publishing our research papers in national and international seminars, conferences, books and journals, to know the truth and reality of the problem.

It is common knowledge that the subject is vast and voluminous, much has been written on it. Even now each year several research volumes are produced. But, why! What is so very special about this subject?

Just, because today we know so little about it. The scholars are still working on the issue around the world, but they are working only in their specific fields of specialization, but not undertaking interdisciplinary approach in the subject matter. The present book has been written with an interdisciplinary approach on the subject, taking into account of all the available published facts and figures of almost all the researches done so far by the expert researchers from different fields of studies for analysis under one roof, just to examine and understand the process of growth, adaptation, development and transformation of art form and various factors responsible for the entire process.

A the initial stage of the research work it was felt a necessity and need of the hour to present the Buddhist art, from the beginning to the time of the Kuṣāṇas, when the Buddhist art was almost developed; and reached to its zenith during the time of Gupta period. The present work deals with the emergence, evolution, development and transformation of sculptural art from Śuṅga to Kuṣāṇa period.

The book is divided into seven chapters as briefly described below, to make it understandable to the common people and specially students of art history to appraise about the continuous and uninterrupted evidence of Indian Sculptural Art Heritage.

(1) It deals with the emergence of the cult of stûpa.It also includes the explanation of the symbolism of the cult of stûpa from the earliest time to the days of Buddhism. The literary evidences of this has been found mentioned in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Mahāparinibban Sutta, Mahāvaṁsa* etc. 2) Much attention has been given to the Sarnath lion capital with special reference to its symbolic meaning. 3) The Buddhist art has been discovered as seen at Bharhut and other contemporary sites like Bodhgaya, Pauni, Sanchi Stûpa No. II, Katar (Musanagar, U.P.) etc., In stûpa No. II at Sanchi a sculpture, carved in the medallion, has been identified as *nāga* king Muchalinda. 4) It deals with more stylish and intricate phase of Buddhist art of Sanchi. An attempt has also been made to identify some unidentified sculptures carved in the stûpa No. I, for example identification of *nāga* Sudar£ana, Kāmdeva and Rati. 5) It deals with the early

sculptural art of Mathura discussing the early sculptures of Maurya and Śuṅga period. Factual descriptions of the sculptures of Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain sects have been described in this chapter. 6) All the aspects of sculptural art, during the transitional phase have been discussed in this chapter. Transitional phase is evidently witnessed in the *āyāgapammas* depicting symbols and *jina* figures. 7) It deals with the fully developed form of Buddha / Bodhisattva figures. Iconography of these figures were the result of combined features of ascetic and *chakravartin* elements except for halo which is the Iranian influence, and is known as *'hvarr'* or the disk of divine glory.

We hope that in posterity the present research work in form of this book, will not only throw new light on the studies of Śuṅgan-Kuṣāṇa art, but will also help the students of art history in their further researches.

Archana Asthana
Ashwani Asthana

ABBREVIATIONS

ABORI	Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
AEHSA	Archaeology of Early Historic South Asia.
AHC	Art History Congress.
AIIS	American Institute of Indian Studies.
ASI	Archaeological Survey of India.
ASR	Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India.
AUM	Allahabad University Museum.
BM	British Museum
BMAUP	Bulletin of Museums & Archaeology, Uttar Pradesh.
E.I.	Epigraphia Indica.
GMM	Government Museum, Mathura.
IAHC	Indian Art History Congress.
IAR	Indian Archaeology - A Review.
IAS	Indian Archaeological Society.
IGNCA	Indira Gandhi National Centre for Art.
IHC	Indian Historical Congress.
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly.
IMB	Indian Museum Bulletin.
IMC	Indian Museum Calcutta
JAIH	Journal of Ancient Indian History.
JASB	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay.
JBORS	Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society.

JHSUP	Journal of the U.P. Historical Society.
JIH	Journal of Indian History.
JIM	Journal of the Indian Museums.
JISA	Journal of Indian Society of Art.
JISOA	Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art.
JPASB	Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
JSAS	Journal of the South Asian Studies
JUPHS	Journal of the United Provinces Historical Society.
MASI	Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India.
MHAC	Museum of the Haryana Archaeology, Chandigarh.
NMD	National Museum, Delhi.
PTS	Pali Text Society.
SAA	South Asian Archaeology.
SBB	Sacred Books of Buddhists.
SBE	Sacred Books of East.
SMSASI	Site Museum Sarnath, Archaeological Survey of India.
SMHPS	State Museum, Himachal Pradesh, Shimla
SML	State Museum, Lucknow.
SMP	State Museum Patna

DIACRITICAL MARKS FOR TRANSLITERATION

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ए	ऐ	ऋ	ऌ
A	ā	i	ī	u	ū	e	ai	ṛ	ḷ

ओ	औ	anusvāra	Visarga	क	ख	ग	घ	ण	च
O	au	ṁ	ṇ	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	ch

छ	ज	झ	ञ	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	त
chh	j	jh	ñ	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	t

थ	द	ध	न	प	फ	ब	भ	म	य
th	d	dh	n	p	ph	b	bh	m	y

र	ल	व	ष्ठा	ज्ञा	स	ह	क्ष	त्र	ज्ञ
r	l	v	ś	ṣ	s	h	kṣ	ṭr	jñ

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This book is dedicated in profound memory of our departed parents

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(c) Gaja Lakṣmī, Kauśāmbī. (Source: Photo by Asthana, Archana)

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Introduction

The origin of Buddhist art was commenced with the accession of king Aśoka. Prior to the Mauryan period, we have so far only one or two examples of Buddhist structural remains in the form of stūpa, like the stūpa at Piprahwa in U. P. and at Vaiśālī in Bihar.

The monumental Chunar sandstone pillars were erected by king Aśoka in different parts at specific location during his regime, which represent the earliest specimen of Buddhist art in India in form of sculptural art and pillar architecture. The most important sculptural remains of the Mauryan period are the pillar capitals and its crowning animal figures as found at Sarnath, Rampurva, Lauriya Nandangarh, Saṅkisā and Sanchi. They provide an excellent evidence of sculptural art during 250 BCE to 232 BCE Aśokan pillars have been found from various places in India. Lithic representation of *vajrāsana* at Bodhgaya is one of the best specimens of Buddhist art of Mauryan period. Stone and terracotta heads of human and animal figures from Sarnath, Pāṭalīputra and other places are other categories of art of the period.

The sculptural art of Bharhut and Sanchi shows continuous evolution of art from 2nd century BCE onwards. The Śuṅga and Sātavāhana period also mark an important phase in the Buddhist architectural and artistic activity. The idea of carving sculptures in low relief, like those in the façade of the Lomas Ṛśi cave, seems to have been inspired the sculptors of Śuṅga and Sātavāhana period. Basically, following the tradition of Mauryan art, the Śuṅga and Sātavāhana sculptors also represents Buddha symbolically, through in many forms, such as footprints, umbrella, stūpa, *bodhi* tree, empty seat, *dharma chakra*, *triratna*, elephant etc.

The next important development of Buddhist art in north India is visible in sculptures at Mathura, during the Kuṣāṅa period which was evolving during the transitional phase i.e. in Śaka period and in the period of early Kuṣāṅa rule i.e., before the advent of Kaniṣka. In the art of Mathura there are some elements, which are available in art of earlier Buddhist centres e.g. structural torso figures of *yakṣa, yakṣī* scenes of *Jātaka* etc. In early stages of art of Mathura school, these element traces a different features and treatment with considerable modification.

Mathura artists have also attempted during the Kuṣāṅa period, to explore a new area for their creative activities under socio-political conditions and evolved a local tradition to achieve remarkable success.

OBJECTIVES

The present book on the topic "*Buddhist Art* : Sanchi to early Mathura" deals with the origin, development, adaptation and transformation of Buddhist art from the beginning up to Kuṣāṅa period. The book is divided into seven chapters. When we took up the research work we felt that it is the need of hour to present the Buddhist art, from the beginning to the time of the Kuṣāṅas, when the Buddhist art was almost developed; and reached in its zenith by the time of Gupta period. The book deals with the evolution, development and transformation of sculptural art from Śuṅga to Kuṣāṅa period. The seven chapters of book are as follows:

The first chapter 'Genesis of the Stūpa Architecture' deals with the emergence of the cult of stūpa. All the circumstances which were responsible for the emergence of stūpa are dealt with in this chapter. It also includes the

explanation of the symbolism of the cult of stūpa from the earliest time to the days of Buddhism. The cult; after assimilation by Buddhists converted from the memorial architecture to divine place of worship to gain all happiness of worldly life and attain *niravāṇa*. All the literary evidences has been given such as *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Mahāparinibban Sutta, Mahāvaṁsa* etc.

Second chapter "Buddhist art towards symbolism: (during third century BCE)," deals with all the traits which came into the Buddhist art and which shows that the origin of the Buddhist art commence with the advent of king Aśoka. Much attention has been given to the Sarnath lion capital with special reference to their symbolic meaning. The lion capital shows the ideology of Aśoka in respect of conception of Buddha as *Mahāpuruṣa*.

Third chapter discusses the Buddhist art as seen at Bharhut and other contemporary sites such as Bodhgaya, Pauni, Sanchi stūpa no. II, Katar (Musanagar, U.P.) etc., A detailed account of the architecture and sculptural art of the Bharhut stūpa and stūpa no. II at Sanchi is given in this chapter. A detailed survey of new dimensions of Buddhist art which became symbolic, elaborate and folk oriented has been done. In stūpa no.II at Sanchi a sculpture carved in the medallion have been identified as *nāga* king Muchalinda.

Fourth chapter deals with more stylish and intricate Buddhist art of Sanchi. Every aspect of sculptural art style has been presented in this chapter. An attempt has also been made to identify some sculptures carved in the stūpa no.I for example identification of *nāga* Sudarśana, Kāmdeva and Rati.

Fifth chapter discusses the early sculptural art of Mathura which includes the early sculptures of Mathura of Maurya and Śuṅga period. The Mauryan art of Mathura mainly comprised huge *yakṣa*/*yakṣī* cult. A factual description of the sculptures of Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain sect has been described.

Sixth chapter is dealt with the transitional phase of Buddhist art between Śuṅga to Kuṣāṅa period. In this chapter, we have discussed every aspect of sculptural art, during the transitional phase. Transitional phase is evidently witnessed in the *āyāgapaṭṭas* depicting symbols and *jina* figure at the same time, in Jain art and architrave depicting symbols and tiny figure of the Buddha in sitting posture in Buddhist art. Tympanum related to both the sect, also depicting the figure of divinities and symbols both at the same time showing the transformation from symbolic worship to initial stage of iconic worship.

The seventh chapter deals with well developed form of Buddha/Bodhisattva figures. Tiny figure of Buddha/ Bodhisattva were replaced by life sized or bigger dimensional figures of Buddha and Bodhisattva. Iconography of these figures was the result of combined features of ascetic and *chakravartin* elements except halo which is Iranian influence where it is known as 'hvarr' or the disk of divine glory. Many transformation and changing concept in the art of Kuṣāṅa, such as emergence of new divinity, carved and inscribed pedestals, new architectural members, such as tympanum and slab, new divinities such as figures of Buddha and Bodhisattva marked the developed stage of Buddhist art at Mathura.

Source material and methodology

The source material which has been used for formulating our conceptual schemes is both literary and archaeological including numismatics and inscriptions. The literary sources include Buddhist/Sanskrit texts duly mentioned in bibliography such as *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Jātaka, Nidānakathā, Dhammapada* commentary and the *Mahāparinirvāna Sutta, Divyāvadāna, Lalitavistara, Buddhacharita, Mahāvastu* may be cited. Besides, the reports published by A.S.I. and the catalogues of different museums are of also great importance. Indeed they gave a new orientation to the whole study.

The secondary sources deal with the works of eminent scholars have been used in the present work and duly mentioned in appropriate place. We have made an extensive survey of the related sites to collect the relevant data for presenting a full and detailed account of the evolution of Buddhist art. Besides, we have visited number of museums having rich collections of sculptural art such as site museums at Sanchi, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Vaishali, Vidisha, Mathura, Lucknow, Indian Museum Kolkata, State Museum Patna, University Museum at Allahabad, Municipal Museum Allahabad, Bharata Kala Bhawan, at Varanasi etc.

CHAPTER 1

Genesis of the Stūpa Architecture

Introduction

The genesis of the Buddhist architecture in India is still wrapped in mist, but fortunately some of the Vedic and Buddhist texts throw light on it. Stūpa is an object of great adoration and worship for Buddhists, because it shows the *dharmakāya* of the '*Tathāgata*' i.e., *Śākyamuni* Buddha. Stūpa architecture though related to Buddhists has the history from Pre-Buddhist times. But, the Buddhist stūpa in any form, conveys the Buddhist ideology of *nirvāṇa*.

Definition

A stūpa is a mound or tumulus, generally erected over a deposit of bodily remains. According to an Encyclopedia of Hindu Architecture - The stūpa is a name of edifices, which serve as receptacle for a relic monument. They are hemispherical or bell- shaped and rests upon a base of three concentric stories, which forms the ambulatories round the top. Sanskrit-English Dictionary of Monnier Williams says, that "the stūpa is a Buddhist monument, (generally of a pyramidal or dome-like in form, created over sacred relics of the historical Buddha (563-478 BCE) or on spots consecrated as the scenes of his acts); a relic shrine or relics casket." It goes on to say that 'stūpa' was originally a topknot of hair, designating the upper part of the head, but subsequently, became used as an architectural term, indicating a monument of a dome-shaped form over the sacred relics of the Buddha, saints or venerable personalities.

Meaning of the term

Stūpa is a Sanskrit term meant for 'pile', in a form of heap that gradually accumulates when each visitor while visiting a grave leaves a small stone/mud on the grave, as a symbol or "calling-card." All over the world, in ancient times we find that the tombs of great individuals were covered with stones, therefore, cairn was eventually the result.

Synonyms of the word stūpa

The word stūpa (Tibetan> *chorten*) is sometimes used for a *chaitya*. A *chaitya* is, in fact, an enclosure - a stūpa with an interior or a building with a stūpa inside it, so that people can be protected from the upheavals of weather. In Burmese it is known as "Pagoda." the word derives from Singhalese (Sri Lankan) "Dāgäba" apparently derived from *Dhātugabbha* of Pali (Sanskrit > *Dhātugarbha*). Sometimes mentioned in older English texts as "Tope" Both may be found either indoors or outside on open ground where the monument also serves as a landmark.

History of stūpa architecture

The tradition of Indian art and architecture has been continuous. As time passed on, it just assimilated new pattern and elements, rejected old ones and created new things to upgrade the classical art, architecture and culture. It also happened within the development of stūpa architecture. It has its roots deeply planted in Indian soil. The following is a brief consideration of this fact.

The concept of stūpa is probably taken by the Buddhists from a pre-Buddhist burial mound. Indeed, the custom was not peculiar to India alone, it was only an adaptation of the worldwide practice of burying the dead under the tumulus or cairn.[1] During the middle bronze age (c.2600 BCE-1500 BCE) we begin to see the appearance of the tumuli, which are burial mounds where the dead, usually upper class are

entombed with gifts of weaponry and jewelry.[2] In certain respects this practice of raising stūpas or sepulcher mounds over the relics had something in common with the custom of megalithic way of disposal of the dead.

Reconstructing the past - The early form of stūpas as revealed through archaeological excavations

The history of Indian civilisation starts from about 2600 BCE. In the Harappan civilization, though we have hardly any evidence of the existence of a shrine or a chapel although certain burial tombs were discovered. J.Ph.Vogel is of the view that at the Harappan civilization site, two artificial mounds were found on the highest tumulus of Mohenjodaro there are ruins of a Buddhist stūpa that may well have been raised on the remains of earlier sanctuary.[3]

Two types of burial practice similar to the stūpa have been noticed in India at Dholavira (Kutch); one is circular and another is circular with spokes on plan. **(Plate 1.1)** The excavations have revealed a circular structure resembling stūpa, of approximate four meters available height, made up of mud bricks and at the central axis below the then working level, a burial pit was found along with burial goods.

Another burial, circular in plan and hemispherical in elevation was excavated. The excavation revealed that a circular platform made up of bricks with white or pink plaster on the outer face of the structure was constructed first. Over the structure, radial wall running towards the centre and the intervening space being filled up with earth mixed with some stones was raised. That is how a hemispherical structure got its shape.[4]

According to excavator Shri R.S. Bisht, gold jewelry and burial pottery were also unearthed from the site. He had termed it as "*sāra rathachakra chiti*" as this burial have 12 spokes. These finding shows that during the Harappan period the tradition of this kind of burial practice was prevailing both in the shape of circular form as well as in spoke wheel pattern. This kind of Buddhist and Jain stūpas were found at Sanghol, **(Plate 1.2)** Taxila, Nagarjunakonda **(Plate 1.3)** and Kankali-Tila **(Plate 1.4)**.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* mentions about large variety of sacrifices and construction of numerous types of the fire altars such as *prauga chiti, droṇa chiti, samūhya chiti, śmaśāna chiti, chandas chiti, śyena chiti, kanka chiti, kūrma chiti* etc. Here we can correlate this burial with the *ratha chakra chiti*.[5]

Proto form of Stūpa–The megalithic 'Tumuli' or cairn circle

The common form of ancient sepulcher found in the southern India and the Deccan is the "tumulus", the prototype of the Buddhist stūpa. These tumuli are low circular mounds of earth surrounded by a ring of big boulders firmly planted in the ground to keep the tumulus in position and to mark the sacred spot." [6]

In some of the megalithic burial tombs resembles with stūpa in form, stūpa originally and subsequently developed from the concept and form of a tumulus, generally round in shape, such burial structures must have close structural affinity with the stūpa architecture.[7]

In various parts of India, number of stone structures known as megaliths has been found. The type of megaliths include tumuli, containing relics in a pot; with or without burial potteries and other objects, are low circular mounds of earth surrounded by a ring of big boulders firmly planted in the ground to keep the tumulus in position and to protect and mark the sacred spot, suggests a relationship to the stūpa erected by the Buddhists and Jain, it could be the result of direct adaptation. They are found at Tamil-Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra-Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya-Pradesh, Uttar-Pradesh and Rajasthan. Some Megalithic caves of Kerala include a central wooden pillar, which is identical to *yūpa* symbolically, or actually present in Buddhist stūpas.[8]

The Megalithic stone circles unearthed around the Nagpur city and at various sites in India are very much similar to this type of burial mound, indicating that the practice of erecting funeral mound was even prior to the period of Buddha. It is most significant to note that they do not belong to any particular religion or cast and are commonly known by the term 'tumuli'. These are low circular mounds of earth surrounded by a ring of boulders.[9]

A type of megalithic burial *kundan-kudai-kal* (handle less umbrella stone or hood stone) **(Plate 1.5)** and also with handle are found at Kerala, they are solid/monolithic semi-hemispherical in shape, over the slab and rests on the ground below which, the relics of the dead one is kept, it

generally measures from 6 to 7 feet in diameter and about 2 feet in height and is monolithic. Its shape resembles to that of small stūpa.[10]

A.H. Longhurst is of the view that the common kind of ancient sepulcher 'Tumuli' found in southern India and the Deccan (Plate 1.6) is the prototype of the Buddhist stūpa. That is why P.V. Kaṇe rightly expressed that "Before the Vedic period the practice of making stūpa was prevailed..." *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* alludes to a similar practice generally observed by the easterners, who used to demarcate tumulus by means of indefinite numbers of stones. [11]

Evolution of stūpa from the Vedic '*Chiti*' as mentioned in Vedic literature

Stūpa, the architectural symbol represents the presence of Buddha, might be unknown in the pre Buddhist time but philologically; the word stūpa was not unknown in the Vedic time. In *Ṛgveda*, *Atharvaveda*, *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the word stūpa occurs, although it refers to a bunch of wool or raised lock of hair or the forepart of the head. The word 'stūpa' is said to have been derived from the Sanskrit root 'stu' meaning 'to worship' or 'to praise" and loosely translated as a knot or tuft of hair." In *Ṛgveda*, stūpa means 'stem of a tree'. It's meaning is 'to heap' or 'pile up'. In *Ṛgveda* there is a reference of a stūpa raised by the king Varuṇa in the forest, in a place having no foundation. [12] (Plate 1.7)

In the *Yajurveda Saṁhitā* there is a reference of erecting a sand stūpa at the time of *'śrāddha'* ceremony. [13]

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa speaks of the religious structures like *yūpa*, *vedī* and the *śmaśāna*.[14] It mentions in the text that, after the departure of the soul of *mahāpuruṣa*, from the earthly place to the heavenly abode, to commemorate the place of his death and to pay homage to the dead either a memorial or a monument is to be erected.[15]

'Śmaśāna' as a burial mound repeatedly referred to in the *Atharvaveda* and later in *Smhitās*. It is clearly stated in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* that, while the orthodox Aryans had the *'śmaśāna'* quadrilateral not separate from earth, the easterners (*prāchayas*) made their mounds round, and separate from the earth. By the *Prāchayas*, who followed *āsurī* tenets, were certainly meant the people of Magadha. It was described as *'chamu'* a large hemispherical bowl. It is clearly stated in the text that stones are used instead of the square bricks in the case of non-fire worshippers.[16 & 17] (Plate 1.8)

Round (*parimaṇḍala*) and dome-shaped tombs erected by the *Prāchayas* are strongly disapproved in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. The eastern tomb was erected separate from the earth may suggest that there was a *vedī* or platform built and over that the human remains were encased in a vaulted or dome shaped structure may be of earth, or even of stones.[18]

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* again, while laying down the rules for the construction of a *śmaśāna chiti* relates some interesting legends regarding their shape and some other features, it mentions that "They now fix pegs round it, a *palāśa* one in front, a *sami* one on the left, a *varaṇa* one behind, a *vṛtra* peg on the right,[19] it may be assumed that this custom remained a source for the later custom of erecting four *toraṇa* or gateways on four sides of the Buddhist stūpa. [20]

In the *Ṛgveda*, the disposal of the dead by means of cremation and burying was in practice, and the word *'anagnidagdhāḥ*, means burial (disposal of the dead without cremation) is mentioned both in the *Ṛgveda* and *Atharvaveda*. It appears that this system of burial was more popular with the non-Aryans. This practice later on treated as something erroneous and the cremation became common practice and the burnt ashes were buried in *śmaśāna*, It was burial mound in which the bones of the dead were kept to rest. In *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* a four-cornered mound facing southeast on ground inclined to the north is prescribed for the ashes of the dead. For an *agnichit* (builder of fire altar) a clay mound like fire altar is prescribed. The easterner made their mounds round in shape.[21] Thus, the Buddha when asked for a stūpa to be erected on the relics of his body was conjecturing a round mound enshrining his remains was *śmaśana* for the easterners.[22]

The *Ṛgveda* also refers to "*Mṛnmaya gṛha*", which means a grave, made of earth. The word *gṛha* means substantial structure. Both *Ṛgveda* and *Atharvaveda* mention that a pillar is set up on the grave after the earth is piled up. It seems that the stūpa has its origin in the form of an altar (*chiti*) or a tumulus piled up at the site of funeral pyre as some kind of memorid with a tree or a wooden post planted in its center, and on this account it was also called a *chaitya*, the tree on it as *chaitya-vṛkṣa* and the post as *chaitya-yūpa*

which were perhaps being raised traditionally as the memorials for departed personages of significant status.[23]

In *Ṛgveda* a collection of flames of fire has also been styled as stūpa. According to V. S. Agrawala, "flaming pile of *agni*'s light is spoken of as a stūpa and is compared to the spreading form of a tree standing in a erect position. He further referrers to the "*hiraṇya* stūpa" or the "golden stūpa" as the descendant of *Agnirasa* or *Agni* as the source of life, and therefore it was an object of worship for Vedic people". It seems that stūpa was primarily an earthen tumulus raised on the relics of the dead. Therefore, the evolution of stūpa can be traced from the burial practices found in the ancient times in India as referred in the Vedic and post-Vedic literatures.

The practice of raising sepulchral mound in the Vedic period followed a supplementary tradition of erecting a pillar or a wooden post known as the "*yūpa*". In the *Ṛgveda* the word *yūpa* has been used in the meanings of "logs of wood lying on the earth".[24] It was generally used for tying the sacrificial animal.[25] The *yūpa* in general "denoted lithic column erected as memorials to the performances by particular individual. The *yūpa* was only a free-standing monolithic or wooden pillar and in the later period, it was erected mainly for commemorative purpose. The *Mahāvaṁśa* mentions that at the site of the stūpa a pillar was erected and it was known as *yūpa*. It may be more appropriate to regard the *yūpa* as a proto-type of the Buddhist stone pillar.

According to Paul Müs, Buddhist art and ideology was inspired by Vedic art. According to him, there is a parallelism between *Upaniṣadic* idea of *brahmakāya* and that of *dharmakāya* of Mahāyāna. In this context he mentions Buddhist links with the concept of some Vedic gods, especially through the Vedic ritual of *agnichayana* represented by an altar consisting of 360 bricks symbolizing annual lunar cycle and presence of *prajāpati* (*agni* and *brāhmaṇa*) a transcendental reality, which did cast its impression, to a considerable extent, on the iconic concept of Buddha including that of *dharmakāya*, especially during Mahāyānic phase. In his view, the sacred altar is also a *yantra* (mystic diagram) and the hymnal chanting on the occasion of sacrificial ritual represents the associated magic which has a parallel in Buddhism in the tradition of enshrining within the stūpas fragments recording sacred text as *dharma* embodied (*dharma-śarīra*). Therefore, he visualizes a close connection between the fire altar and Buddhist stūpa (*chaitya*), which has been regarded in the Buddhist tradition as the body of Buddha. [26]

In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (1.10.3) it mentions about the stūpa that—

I am the shaker of the tree!
My fame is like a mountain peak!
Immaculate; up on high,
Immortal wealth of victory,
I am a treasure shining bright!
Undecaying, immortal, and wise!

(The Vedic recitation of Triśaṅku-*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*)[27]

Thus, it is appropriate to trace the conceptual and purposive similarity between the Buddhist stūpa and *chiti* of Vedic period. *Chiti* also mentioned as '*aiḍūka*', '*śmaśāna*' and '*chaitya*' in Vedic and post Vedic literatures.

Evolution of "*chaitya*" from Vedic "*chitya*"

Chaitya (*chetiya*) is a one of the synonym of stūpa. The worship of *chaitya* was in vogue long before the epoch of the Buddha. Interesting thing is that the term is not only denoting architecture but to sacred trees, memorial stones, images etc. Infact, any thing, which was being worshipped was called *chaitya* i.e. *chaitya yūpa, yajña chaitya, chaitya-vṛkṣa, chaitya pāsāda.* We also find references about *chatus chaitya* situated at the meeting point of four streets. *"Chaitya"* was a popular cult even during the time of Buddha. According to *Dīgha Nikāya* he visited *udena, gotama* and *sattāmbaka chaitya.* He also lived at the *ānand chaitya* in Bhojanagara.[28]

The word *chaitya* is probably derived from the word *'chitya'*, the word occurred in older *saṁhitās.* Fifth *kāṇḍa* of *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* says the following lines about *chitya.*[29]

"Rūpāṇi sarvāṇi rupāṇi agnau chitye kriyante tasmāt etāḥ agneḥ chityasya."

It says about an *agni chitya* to which offerings are made. It also means *'chayana'.* The *chayana* ritual deals with the collection of sacred ashes and the sacrifices, piling them in a certain place apparently, fenced with walls of stone, brick or even mud. The reason behind this is to keep the things related to *yajña* sacred from the villagers or animals. (**Plate 1.9**)

The *yūpa* as a memorial were also erected near the *chaitya yajña* for tying the sacrificial animal. Mahābhārata mentions about *chaitya yūpa śatānkita. Śabda Kalpadruma* quotes an ancient text of Bhārata; it indicates that *chaitya* is *yajñasthāna* or *yajñāyatana*, a sacred place set apart for the performance of yajñās.[30] The tradition of stūpa with pillar might have inspired by the *Yajña chaitya* and *yūpa*. It may be regarded as the origin and commencement of *chaitya* cult.

Another derivation of word *chaitya* is from '*chiti*' or '*chita.*' Various types of fire altars or *Chiti* have been mentioned in the Vedic texts, i.e. *ratha chakra chiti, droṇa chiti, śyena chiti, kanaka chiti, kūrma chiti,* etc. These can be interpreted as funeral pile or *Agni*. Some times *chitā* is extended to *śmaśāna.* "*chitā*" or "*chitya*" is extensively used in *Saṁhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas*, but for the first time *chaitya* in the meaning of *yajña-sthāna* occurs in '*Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra*' the text written probably before six century B.C. Thus the words *chitya* or *chaitya* connotes the same thing. *Arthaśāstra* refers the word *chiatyasthāna* as a burial ground. Now, in *Pitṛa Medha Sūkta, Śrautakośa*, it is mentioned that, after cremation of the dead, after three days or any odd days the collection of bones was done after that on the full moon day or on new moon day the *śrāddha* ceremony was done and the remains of the dead was entombed in a mud stūpa (The piling up of the *chiti, 'loṣta chitī)* and as a memorial, a wooden pillar was installed over the stūpa.[31] Perhaps this tradition, i.e. burying the remains of dead, after the cremation, has inspired the building of Buddhist stūpa.

The difference between Vedic '*chiti*' and Buddhist stūpa (with reference to Vaiśāli stūpa)

The funeral mounds of the Vedic Aryans referred to in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* were about seven or eight feet in diameter. Tomb was to be only as big as the fire altars i.e. *agni-chiti*, without wings and tail. It was big enough to accommodate one body only.

The height of the funeral mound contemplated by the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* was about seven or eight feet in the case of a *kṣattriya*, or as high as a man standing, for a *brāhmaṇa* it went up only to the mouth, for a *śūdra* it stopped at the knees.[32] The height of Vaiśāli i.e. a buddhist stūpa, after completion was supposed to have been nine feet.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* mentions that, the easterners put an intervening platform between the stūpa and earth, a practice not approved by the Vedic tradition. It quotes--

> "*Antardhāya ha eke nirvapanti tasmadya daivyaḥ prajāh anantarhitāni taḥ śmaśānam kurvanti. Atha yaḥ asuryaḥ prāchyaḥ antarhitāni chaiva.*"

In Vaiśāli stūpa there is a platform or berm, but it does not clearly separate the stūpa from the surface below. The Vedic stūpa had a brick *agnichiti* within it. But the one at Vaiśāli was entirely made up of earth. In Vaiśāli there is no *agnichiti* at the centre, but it is entirely built up of mud.[33]

The *chiti* of Vedic people was very small; it was feared, if the dead man were given too much space, he would try to carry away a companion with him. Buddhist stūpas were initially small but with passing of time they took a huge shape.

All the Brahmanical stūpas were sepulchral mounds, where as the Buddhist stūpas were not sepulchral, after the death of Buddha, Some stūpas were made to commemorate the location of a sacred place devoid of relics of any kind. Circumambulation of the funeral pyre were performed anti clockwise and never clockwise (*pradakṣiṇā*), as corporeal remains were regarded as impure. Whereas, in the case of Buddhist stūpa, it is clockwise because, it is considered to be a holy place.

Brahmanical stūpas were made on most deserted area, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* says in this regard that "Let him not make it where it would be visible from here, for assuredly it is beckoning and another of these (member of family) quickly follows (the deceased) in death.[34] Whereas the Buddhist stūpas were made on the meeting point of four roads means most frequented places, so by seeing it people gain spiritual merit.

Buddhist stūpa is a symbol of life or attaining the spiritual bliss whereas the Brahmanical stūpa represent death.[35]

Jain stūpa

In the pre Buddhist period, the Jain also erected stūpas on the holy spots to commemorate places visited by the *Tīrthaṅkaras*. It is evident from the Kankali-Tila at Mathura. This stūpa is said to have been built by the *devatas* (*deva nirmita* stūpa)'. This Jain stūpa was similar to that of

Buddhist stūpas, that once the king Kaniṣka found himself worshipping a Jain stūpa in the mistaken belief that it was a Buddhist one. [36 & 37] To us, Jain and buddhist tradition of erecting stūpa goes side by side.

The evidences of stūpa in Buddhist literature

The Pali canon provides the evidence of early Buddhist art; it is divided into three *Piṭakas* viz. the *Sutta*, the *Vinaya* and the *Abhidhamma*. Probably these are the earliest sources to inform us about the early Buddhist art and architecture, including the fifth *Nikāya* of the *Sutta-Piṭaka* the famous *Dhammmapada*.

An interesting dialogue between the dying Buddha and Ānanda in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* affords a glimpse of the beginning of stūpa cult. Ānanda asks, "What are we to do, lord, with the remains of the *Tathāgata*?" Buddha replies: "Hinder not yourselves, Ānanda, by honoring the remains of the *Tathāgata*. Be zealous, I beseech you Ānanda, in your own behalf! Devote yourselves to your own good! Be earnest, be zealous, be intent on your good! There are wise men, Ānanda, among the nobles, among the Brāhmaṇas, among the heads of houses, who are firm believers in the *Tathāgata*; and they will do honour to the remains of the *Tathāgata*." Here Buddha declares unequivocally that for a follower of the eightfold path and the seeker of *nirvāṇa*, the worship of the bodily remains of the *Tathāgata* would prove a hindrance rather than an aid. Such worship was the business of laymen who sought not *nirvāṇa* but happiness in this world and in the next. When Ānanda still insisted on knowing how the remains of the *Tathāgata* were to be disposed off, Buddha replied that the remains of the *Tathāgata* should be treated in the same manner as the remains of a king of kings[38] or chakravartins.

Stūpa as depicted in *Jātakas*

We also find references of early stūpa construction in *Jātaka* tales. In the *Mahākapi Jātaka* we find that when a noble monkey king died, he was honoured with obsequies befitting a king. After the body of the monkey king had been burnt on the funeral pile, the ministers returned to the king taking with them the 'crown of the head ', 'the skull'. The king caused a *chaitya* to be made on the spot where the body was cremated and honored with burning lamps, garlands and perfumes, while the skull, ornamented with gold, was placed on a spearhead. The spearhead with skull of the monkey king was set up at the royal gate and the relics were honored for seven days, and thereafter, it was enshrined in a *chaitya* especially build for the purpose.

In another Sujāta *Jātaka* also provides some clues, when his grandfather died, his father formed a mound of earth and enshrined the body remains of the sire.

The *Bāhiya sutta* in *Udāna* says that when Bāhiya the wandering ascetic clad in a wooden robe, was found dead on the road after his conversion to the Buddhist faith the Buddha asked the monks who accompanied him to carry the dead body on a *mancha* (bier) and to erect a stūpa in honor of Bāhiya, after cremating his body out side the city of Śrāvastī. His orders were forth fully carried out to Jetavana and report the matter to the master. [39]

Stūpa as described by Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang

In Buddhism, there is a legend on how the stūpa came about. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited India between 629 to 645 A. D. During his travels through the ancient land of Bactria; there he heard a story about the making of stūpa. The Buddha presented his first two disciples, the merchants Tapussā and Bhallika, with a lock of his hair and nail-cuttings. He then instructed them on how to make a stūpa over these items. "He took his three garments folded them into four and piled them up on the ground, beginning with the largest and finishing with the smallest. Than he took his begging bowl and inverted it upon the garments. Finally, he stuck his beggar's staff on the top and said; 'that is the way to make a stūpa". [40]

Epigraphical evidence of Stūpa constructed before the Buddha

There stūpas were also constructed even before the Buddha; it is attested by epigraphic evidences. One of the pillar inscriptions of Aśoka suggests that at Nigalisagar, the village of Niglihawa (now in Nepal) **(Plate 1.10)**, Aśoka enlarged an older stūpa of previous 'Buddha Kanakamuni' to the double of its previous size. This Niglihawa pillar was discovered by A.A. Fuhrer in March 1895. The inscription on pillar reads "fourteen years after coronation, king Priyadarśī, beloved of Gods, enlarged the stūpa enshrining the relics of the twenty-fourth Buddha "Kanakamuni" to the double of its previous size, and twenty years after his coronation, he visited the spot in person,

offered worship at the place, and caused this stone pillar to be erected. It suggests that core of this stūpa is of pre Mauryan times. It might have been built prior to the time of Buddha, according to my opinion it would have been similar to the stūpa of Piprahwa and Vaiśalī. [41]

Stūpa as depicted in Tibetan versions of the lost Sanskrit originals, found in the *Kangyur* testament

According to Pema Dorjee the ancient Indian literature is replete with stūpa construction manual, which provides source for the study of the early Buddhist art and architecture. We find literary evidences of early Buddhist art in form of stūpa in *Vinaya-Piṭaka, Vinayavastu, Vinayavibhanga, Vinaya-kṣudrakavastu* and *Vinayauttergrantha.* Among these, the latter two throws light on the subject of Buddhist stūpa architecture. **(Plate 1.11)** Both texts are Tibetan versions of the lost Sanskrit originals, found in the *Kangyur* testament.[42]

Tibetan text mentions that the Anāthapiṇḍikā the merchant prince of Śrāvastī (the capital of Kośala) built a stūpa in India during the lifetime of Buddha. A Tibetan version of the *Vinayakṣudra Vastu* of the *Mūlasravāstivādin* text, mentions about the construction of a stūpa over the corporeal relics of Sāriputra. This source describes Buddha's own instructions; according to the legend, "Much earlier, the relics of Ārya Sāriputra were carried away by the house holder Anāthapiṇḍikā and placed in a prominent place in his house to enable the people to come there and pay homage. On a certain occasion, he locked the door of his house and went to a hilly site for a minor work. When people came to show there veneration, they found that there were no place for worship to which the people accused him of interfering with there obtaining of merits, he heard this upon his return and raised this matter before Buddha, whom he asked to give his consent for constructing a stūpa over relics of Sāriputra at a place visible or accessible to all for making offerings. Anāthapiṇḍikā asked how to build the stūpa .The Buddha instructed, one should construct gradual flights of four steps and than a vase-support or *kumbha* upon this vase or stūpa dome, a *bre* or *droṇa* or *harmikā,* axle pole (*yaṣṭi*), one umbrella or two or three or four, up to thirteen umbrella should be made, and the rain cloak (*varṣa sthalī)* should be placed, the Buddha said that stūpa should be build like this..." We find description of a stūpa constructed over the relics of Buddha's hair and nails in *Kangyur* text by the Anāthapiṇḍika during Buddha's lifetime.[43]

We also get description of applying white wash on the stūpa and offerings of incense, scent and flowerers. To protect the stūpa's environment by strewing cow dung, the Buddha instructed to Anāthapiṇḍikā to erect railings around stūpa with gateways. The *Vinaya Uttaragrantha* also mentions about to paint the pillars with vermilion and makings drawings on the walls with lacquer dye (evidence of coating the pillars with red vermilion/hematite can be seen in the eastern gateways of Sanchi stūpa- No.I) **(Plate 1.11)**. Reference mentions of fixing a peg on the stūpa for offering flower garland to be hung on it. In this regard Buddha suggested that the fixing up of peg, like a cow's tooth but, only during the construction of stūpa and not after. Once Anāthapiṇḍikā laid a proposal to offer the victory banners or *dhawaja,* Buddha answered, that the bull, *nāga,* crocodile and lion *dhawaja* can be offered for stūpa. Buddha agreed to anoint the stūpa with oil and red arsenic or with sandal perfume.[44] Since these references of Buddhist texts, were originally translated from Sanskrit ones and appears to be a later tradition hence, they are not reliable.

Change in the concept of stūpa

The stūpa developed as the nucleus of Buddhist faith and worship. As discussed earlier these relic' mounds were also common during the lifetime of the Buddha. Buddhist made extensive use of these structures as an object of supreme veneration and sanctity and developed it along in their own lines to such an extant that later on stūpas were converted from simple earthen mound to an ostentatious structure of great architectural magnificence and become the chief emblem of the Buddhist faith. **(Plate 1.13)** To a Buddhist, the erection of stūpa even of sand was an act of profound merit.[45] because it represents the Buddha himself. *Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka Sūtra* (Mahāyānic text) also narrates that, once *Mahāpratibhāvān* Bodhisattva enquired from Buddha about the significance of the appearance of a huge stūpa in front of him; Buddha replied to him that in this stūpa exists the actual body of the *Tathāgata.*

"Aham cha drishto iha śāsanami
Bhagāvamścha yoyam sthita stūpa-madhya".

According to *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* Buddha described the merit of worshipping a stūpa; The stūpa of the exalted one, an awakened one, worthy of stūpa, the hearts of many

shall be made calm and happy; and since they had calmed and satisfied in their hearts they will be reborn after death, when the body was dissolved, in the happy realms of heaven. It is on account of this circumstance, Ānanda, that a *Tathāgata* an able awakened one is worthy of a stūpa. *The Buddha said that* who so ever *sees a dharmakāya stūpa, will be liberated by the sight of it.*

There is no doubt, however, that *Śākyamuni* Buddha imbued them with spiritual meaning and ignited an appreciation for the spiritual potency of stūpas. The Buddha taught and demonstrated that stūpas are powerful agents of purification and spiritual transformation. On in one occasion he sent a dying man to restore and re-consecrate a stūpa in disrepair. After the brāhmiṇ completed the work according to the Buddha's instructions, his body became miraculously strong and majestic. In one of the *jātaka*, it narrates that in one of Buddha's previous lifetimes there were seven bugs lived on a leaf of a tree that was beside a lake, and in the middle of that lake there was a stūpa. One day, that leaf just broke off the tree, floated down on the top of the water and then was blown around the stūpa a few times and then finally the bugs drowned, but because they went around the stūpa a few times, they received a blessing.

Traditionally, it is believed, that the seed of liberation was planted in their mind stream, and because there was that seed present, it had to ripen and eventually after a few lifetimes, all those bugs awakened to enlightenment by virtue of the fact that they accumulated that merit, and therefore, by seeing a stūpa or hearing about a stūpa, remembering it, visualizing it, whatever the case may be, any kind of connection will imbued with a blessing, will connect to enlightenment. So, whether it is a bug or a human or animal without a body, just floating through space, any being that comes in contact with a stūpa will be blessed and gain merit.[46]

Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche says that "even though no living master may be present to teach the *dharma* in actuality, generation after generation, people continue to see the stūpa with their eyes, receive blessings, understand that there are the three jewels in which you can place your trust, and in this way, naturally, the *dharma* continues. In the same way, when building a stūpa for the remains of a great master, his power and blessings will remain. That is the reason to build a stūpa."

Types of stūpa

The Buddhist stūpas are of four types, they are *śārīrika, pāribhogika, uddeśika* and votive. *Śārīrika* stūpas are those which were erected over the corporeal relics of the Buddha or his chief disciples. The *pāribhogika* types of stūpas were erected over the object, which believe to have been used by Buddha, like begging-bowl. The *uddeśika* types of stūpas are those, which were commemorative of incidents of Buddha's life. Whereas the pilgrims during their visit the sacred sites erects the votive stūpa for attaining religious merit.[47]

Stūpa erected over the remains of *Śākyamuni* Buddha

According to *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, Buddha directed his chief disciple Ānanda to construct stūpa at the crossing of four highways over his bodily relics after cremation in the same fashion as the stūpa of a universal king. The manner in which the remains of *Tathāgata* should be treated was explained to the Mallas of Kuśīnārā in the following words, (Plate 1.14) "They wrap the body of a king of kings in a new cloth. When that is done they wrap it in corded cotton wool. When that is done they wrap it in a new cloth, and so on till they have wrapped the body in five hundred successive layers of both kinds. Than they place the body in an oil vessel of iron, (Plate 1.15) and than build a funeral pile of all kinds of perfumes, and burn the body of the king of kings, and than at the four cross roads they erect a "dāgäba" to the king of kings. This Ānanda is the way in which they treat the remains of a king of kings, and as they treat the remains of a king of kings, so, Ānanda, should they treat the remains of the *Tathāgata*." At the four cross roads a "dāgäba" should be erected to the *Tathāgata*. And whosoever shall there place garlands or perfumes or paint to make salutation there, or became in its presence calm in heart that shall long be to them for a profit and joy".[48] The Malla's of Kuśīnārā built a funeral pile of all kinds of perfumes to a sanctified place. (Plate 1.16)

Venerable Mahākassapa performed the rites, after the cremation, the bones were collected in an earthen jar and carried to the council hall of the Malla's. Remains of the Buddha after the cremation caused a 'Great War' popularly known as 'War of relics' among his followers, kings and republic and ultimately as a compromise eight equal divisions of the ashes were made. (Plate 1.17)

The *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, mentions a vivid account of the disposal of Buddha's body. W. Rhys David's writes, "The oldest authority, the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, which can be dated approximately in the fifth century BCE states that after the cremation of the Buddha's body at Kuśīnārā, the remains were divided into eight portions allotted as follows; (Plate 1.18) to Ajātaśatru king of Magadha, to the Lichchhavis of Vaiśālī, to the Śākyas of Kapilvastu, to the Bulīs of Allakappa, to the Koliyas of Rāmagrāma, to the Brahmin of Veṭhadīpa, to the Mallas of Pāvā, to the Mallas of Kuśīnārā." People of these clans took away the relics of Buddha and constructed stūpa over it. (Plate 1.19)

The available archaeological evidence reveals that the early Buddhist stūpas, which were made of earth, had a circular plan, Brāhmaṇa Droṇa, who was also a devotee of Buddha, built stūpa enshrining the relic jar, after their division, and Mauryas of Piplivana erected a stūpa on charcoal remains collected from Buddha's cremation site.[49]

If we believe texts like *Mahāprinibbāna Sutta* and *Parinirvāṇa Sūtra* of *Mūlasarvāstivādin*, the Buddha must have recommended the construction of one stūpa and not several, over his relics. According to these texts, the Buddha's recommendation was not observed and the relics were divided in to eight parts and stūpas were erected over each part. [50]

Who are the men, worthy of stūpa?

Buddha told Ānanda according to *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, "The men worthy of stūpa were four in number viz. "A *tathāgata*, an able awakened one, is worthy of a stūpa, one awakened for himself alone (ie. *pratyekabudha*-A *pratyekabuddha* is a Buddha for himself alone, who has won enlightenment, but lives in solitude and does not reveal his enlightenment to the world) is worthy of a stūpa; a true hearer of the *tathāgata* (*tathāgata-savaka)* is worthy of a stūpa, a king of kings (*Rājā Chakkavatti*) is worthy of a stūpa." [51]

Archaeological remains of pre Mauryan Buddhist stūpa

Vaiśālī (Plate 1.20, 1.21) the ancient center of Lichchhavi clan was having a stronghold of Buddhism in the early days. Buddha is said to have visited it many times during his lifetime. In one of these visits, several monkeys are said to have offered the *Śākyamuni* a pot of honey, this incident finds mention among the eight great events. It was here that the Buddha announced his approaching *nirvāṇa* and after his *nirvāṇa* the Lichchhavis erected a stūpa over their share of the remains of Buddha.

This earliest stūpa was in form of a very low mound, constructed by layers of piled-up mud, i.e. the earthen funeral mound; the layers of piled-up mud were separated from one another by a thin layers or *Kankar* and cloddy clay. The stūpa, was originally 25 feet in diameter, and had projections at four cardinal directions, prototypes of the *āyakas* of the lower Krishna valley stūpas at Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda etc. There was no drum (*medhi)* around it. It was enlarged four times. The first enlargement, made with bricks measuring 15x9x2 cm. contained a piece of chunar sandstone and has been ascribed to the period of Aśoka.[52] It is fairly certain that the mud stūpa at Vaiśālī was built by the Lichchhavis in the first half of the fifth century BCE.

The brick stūpa at Piprahwa, (Plate 1.22) district, Siddharthnagar, is 116 feet in diameter at the base, a huge stone box, weighing 1537 lbs. was discovered, and containing four caskets, one of which was inscribed text reads as:

> "*Sukitibhatinam saputadalikanam iyam salilanidhane Budhasa Bhagavato Sakiyānaṃ*"

According to Rhys Davids and Levi, it means that the contents were the relics of the Buddha enshrined for their spiritual welfare by the Śākyas, the brethren of the famous one, alongwith their sons, daughters and sisters.[53]

Here the stūpa was built up of bricks with ashlar masonry. The stone box contains many articles, having great artistic significance, it also contained some bones as a relics. The articles includes ornamental forms and flowers leaves in various semi precious stones like carnelian, amethyst, topaz, garnet, coral, crystal, shell, other metals including gold. A square gold leaf stamped with a lion, a gold leaf stars, minutely carved miniature leaves of crystal and other substances *triratna*, gold leaf cross, a coil of fine silver wire, swastika stamped on gold leaf, taurine symbol stamped on gold leaf, small pearls, bead of beryl, topaz, a small bird in red carnelian, an elephant in gold leaf, a figure of

earth Goddess stamped on gold foil another standing female figure heavily draped having an elaborate fan like coiffure, marked by some auspicious symbolism fixed in the hair, a remarkable decoration designs were found on a long disc of gold leaf. [54]

According to Debala Mitra, "The original stūpa was no doubt a very old one, may be pre-Mauryan, from its primitive features and from the fact that a trench had been driven into its core in old times, it has been held that the stūpa is none other than the one erected by the Lichchhavis over their share of the relics of Buddha, the trench being the one that was excavated by Aśoka to reach the relics, some of which, according to Hiuen Tsang, were left in their original position by Aśoka. Further, the situation of the stūpa has been thought to answer to Hiuen Tsang's location of the stūpa built by the Lichchhavis. If this identification of the site as Kapilvastu is correct, the stūpa would be the earliest as yet discovered". [55]

Lauriyanandangarh is a village 15 miles northeast of Betiah in Champaran district is an interesting site. There are earthen mound in north to south and west to east. Cunningham identified them as sepulchral mounds and assigned to a period from 1500 to 600 BCE. In one of the mound a wooden post was revealed in the center, indicating it as a burial mound.

There are five mounds in the eastern and western row. Inner north and south row have six mounds and the outer northern and southern row have four big and seven small mounds. Average heights of the mounds are ranging from 15 to 55 feet. One important finding from one of the burial is a repousse gold plaque mother goddess similar to the one found at Piprahwa and depicted on ancient small rectangular metallic pieces from Rajgir.

Mother goddess found at Lauriyanandangarh, is similar to that of carved in ring stones. Mother goddess-wearing bangles in her both hands and a beaded girdle over waist. Feet and hands are outward in stretched position wearing no garments. Hairdo is also ornamented with bead like thing in the middle and leaf like design on either side of it, which suggests that the tradition of worshiping mother goddess in pre Mauryan period was equally popular as it was in pre and proto historic periods.

Scholars view on the genesis of stūpa

As discussed above regarding the evolution of stūpa, it may be mentioned here that different scholars have their different views on this subject. Some scholar believes that it is evolved out of tumuli/ tumulus. Some are of the view that it was originated from Vedic burial practices.

Like E. Senart is of the view that the stūpa is a stone representation of the round hut of the early fire-worshippers, and the *harmikā* imitates altar of fire.

E. B. Havell is of the view that, the Aryan tomb derived from the Āryan chieftain's hut.

Stella Kramrisch is of the view that the stūpa architecture is the resultant of the combination of Vedic altars and cairn of the ancient times [56]

S. K. Saraswati says, "This hemispherical structure emerged out of the earthen funeral mounds (*Śmaśāna*) under which according to the Vedic rituals, the ashes of the dead were buried."

A. C. Banerji says that, it is quite possible that the round form of *'Āsurī'* burial mound ultimately gave birth to round stūpa as found all over India, because Buddhism, after all, is a religion of eastern India. [57]

Vincent A. Smith says that, "The domical form of the masonry stūpa is derived from the curved roof of bamboos built over a primitive circular hut- shrine constructed of perishable materials. Circular shrines with conical roofs still exist among the Todas, and such a structure, if fitted with a domical roof, would be a stūpa" [58]

M.V. Krishna Rao says, "The crude megalithic structures, dolmens cromlechs and hero shrines essentially tumular and external spread all over Mysore and the south, might have been the nucleus on the basis of which the early Buddhist architecture of the south developed."[59] A.H. Longhurst has also expressed the same view.

In my opinion the Vedic circular burials were the prototype of Buddhist stūpa. It gradually, developed from a simple mound of earth or piled up stones in proto historic/ megalithic period. The circular form of piled up mud with *Yūpa* and lower *vedikā* of the Vedic times further developed in the Aśokan period with the addition of the architectural feature such as monolithic *harmikā, chhatra, yaṣṭi*; mud stūpa were now transformed in to brick masonry having monolithic pillars in its vicinity.

Summary

Erection of stūpa is a pre Buddhist practice Rhys Davids has said that, "The topes were not necessarily Buddhist monuments, but pre-Buddhists, and indeed only a slight modification of a world wide custom".

Brahmanical religion too had burials, which resembles stūpa in form, if not in name in fact they serve as a prototypes of Buddhist stūpa. But, Buddhists made stūpa a popular and sacred structure.

The pattern of making memorial burials has a long history in Indian context from pre and proto historic times. In the process of its evolution, various addition and subtractions were made in its architecture. For example in the early phase, the depiction of altar was a prominent feature of *harmikā* but not afterwards. **(Plate 1.23)**

The parasol staff or *Yaṣṭi* was not an important architectural feature in early phase, but *Yūpa* was then one of the architectural features as evident from stūpa at Lauria Nandangarha and Piprahwa. With the passage of time *vedikā, hamikā, chhatra, toraṇa,* upper *vedikā* and other architectural members were added to it.

In the early phase only *śārīrika* stūpa were erected but later on *pāribhogika, uddéśika* and votive stūpa were also constructed, with the increase in the promotion, propagation and devotional faith of Buddhism among the mass.

All kind of stūpa, weather it is a relic stūpa, *pāribhogika* or *uddéśika* became the symbol of purity and the means for salvation/ *nirvāṇa.*

As a result, the stūpa became the center of Buddhist art, which flourished in Śuṅga period, therefore, the early Buddhist art centers were developed at Sanchi, Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Kauśāmbī, Amaravati, and Pauni etc.

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   The verse says:

   रथचक्र चित्यस्य सं क्षेपोक्तस्य विष्णुनाः ।

   अथ धातर्निविष्ठस्ययत्रिगुणान्य बहिर्बही ॥ (मानव शुल्ब-सूत्रम् 3/7)
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    अबुध्नेराजा वरुणो वनस्योर्ध्वं स्तूपं ददते पूतदक्षः । (*Ṛgveda,* 1.24.7.)
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भीष्मेण धर्मतो राजन्सर्वतः परिरक्षिते ।
बभूव रमणीयश्च चैत्य यूप शताङ्किताः ॥ (I ii 8. 13) *Mahabharata*
यज्ञस्थानं केचित्तु मुखरहितं देवकुल सदृशं
यज्ञयतंसचित्यमचित्यमपीत्याहुः ।
(*Śabda Kalpadruma*)

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According to *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta--*
बुद्धोऽवोचत्"चत्वार आनन्द पुरुषा लोके स्तूभ्नपार्हाः ।
पुरुषाः स्तूपार्हागन्धपुष्प नृत्यगीतार्हाः ।
कतमे चत्वारः प्रथमः तथागत स्तूपार्हाः । द्वितीयः प्रत्येकबुद्धः ।तृतीयः तथागतश्रावकः । चतुर्थः चक्रवर्त्ती राजा च ।इमआनन्द चत्वारः ।

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CHAPTER 2

Buddhist Art towards Symbolism (during 3rd Century BCE)

The development of Buddhist art in India is marked by distinctive stages of evolution. It first passed through the stage of symbolic representation of Buddha in the form of stūpa containing Buddha's relics. Time between the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of Buddha and advent of Aśoka on the throne of Pāṭalīputra may be treated as transitional phase for Buddhist sculptural art. Buddhist art was taking a shape in the form of symbolic representations, which were adopted from the earlier and existing religious system. We did not get any substantial art remains of this period, most probably because the medium of the art objects were perishable. Although, punch marked coins, Aśokan inscriptions and ancient literature throws some light on Buddhist art during; as well as little earlier to the 3rd century BCE. Thus, the chapter have been divided in two parts; first part deals with the Buddhist art before the Aśokan period and the second deals with the Buddhist art during the Aśokan period.

The term symbolism

Symbolism is a method of representation of persons, things, events, thoughts, feeling, ideas, creeds or experiences by symbols, emblems or signs. These symbols, emblems or signs have certain significant forms established by literary or artistic convention or by both.[1]

Symbols are the objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts. A symbol, in its basic sense, is a conventional representation of a concept; i.e., an idea, object, quality, quantity, etc.

According to Webster's *Third New International Dictionary*-- "A symbol is defined as something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental, but not intentional resemblance; esp., a visible sign of something as a concept or an institution that is invisible; arbitrary or conventional sign, an object or act that represents a repressed complex through unconscious association rather than through objective resemblance or conscious substitution..."[2]

Early phase: Negation of sculptural art

The early Brahmanical or Vedic religion was not favourable for the growth of sculptural art, as it enjoined the worship of gods not through images installed in temples, but through sacred fires installed in simple sheds called *Prāchīnavaṁśa*. In *Kūṭadanta Sutta*, Buddha mentions about great sacrifice to be performed by Kūṭadanta[3] for which a hundred bulls, a hundred steers, a hundred heifers, a hundred goats and a hundred rams had been brought to the post and a sacrificial pit was prepared.[3] It was a simple and temporary shade made up of bamboo grass and clay, where the sacrifices were performed. This practice is still in prevalence. **(Plate 2.1)**

Yāska's *Nirukta*, a work assigned to about 500 BCE by modern scholars, contains the passage about the form of the Vedic gods; it says "...The gods do not resemble human beings in form (*apuruṣavidhāḥ*), because those gods that are actually seen do not resemble human beings in form; as for instance *Agni, Vāyu, Āditya, Prithivī, Chandramā*, etc...." It shows till the time of Yāska which synchronises with the last phase of the Vedic period, the Vedic gods were not invested with the forms in which they appear in the Epic and the *Purāṇas*, as they were identical with the sacrifices.[4]

Though, some of the ancient text like Pāṇini's *sūtra* and *Jīvikārthe Capanye* gives us positive information about

the concrete representations of deities during 5th century BCE but the idea can not be drawn about the nature of deities whose *pratikṛti* were made as a means of livelihood by a certain class of people.[5]

Jain texts mentions the festivities (*maha*) celebrations in honour of *'Indra', 'Khanda', 'Rudra', 'Mukunda', 'Śiva', 'Veśamṇa', 'Nāga', 'Jakkha', 'Bhūya', 'Ajjā'* and *'Koṭṭakiriyā'*.[6] According to Jain text *Āvaśyaka Chūrṇi* the festival *Khandamaha* was in vogue during the life time of Mahāvira. It is mentioned that when he reached *'Savatthi'*, a well-decked image of *Khanda* was taken out in a chariot procession. *Bhadrabāhu Bhāṣya* mentions that the shrine of *Skanda, Mukunda* and other deities are referred to; their images were made of wood, and an oil lamp used to remain lighting in the shrines during night. Sometimes the burning wick of the lamp, were removed by mouse or shaken by dog, which some times causes fire to the wooden image. In *Tevigga Sutta*, on knowledge of the Vedas, Buddha mentioned eight Vedic *devtās* viz., *Indra*; *Soma*; *Varuṇa*; *Īsāna*; *Prajāpati*; *Bramhā*; *Mahiddhi* and *Yama*.[7]

Time during and just after the Buddha, was not favourable for Buddhist art. In *Dasa Dhammika Sutta*, instructions were given to the monks and nuns in following words. "If a brother or sister sees various colours, such as wreaths, dressed images, dolls, clothes, woodwork, plastering, paintings, jewellery, ivory-work, strings, leaf cutting, they should not, for the sake of pleasing the eyes, go where ever they see these colours and forms." Sisters were forbidden to look on 'conversation pictures or love scenes, while the brethren were only permitted to have paint on the monastery walls or the walls of their caves retreats the representation of wreaths and creepers, never of men and women.[8] The Buddhist art of ancient India was no exception to what has been said above, in fact, Buddhism was originally an another worldly ascetic religion with no place for fine arts in its thinking. *Brahmajāla Sutta* [9] and the *Pātimokkha Sutta* [10] express the same idea that the arts and crafts are unworthy for those who seek ultimate liberation. When Khabbaggiya *Bhikkus* had painted circular linings on the bottom of their bowls, with painted figures scattered over it, or painted in patches of colour, they used to walk about the streets exhibiting them. On this matter Buddha said "You are not, O *Bhikkhus*, to have painted circular supports to the bottoms of your bowls covered with figures, and painted in patches of colour, whosoever shall do so shall be guilty of a *dukkata*. I allow you. O *Bhikkhus*, only ordinary linings.[11] *Dhammapada* verses 87-88[12] also states that--

Abandoning the dark way,

Let the wise man cultivate the bright path.

Having gone from home to homelessness,

Let him yearn for that delight in detachment,

So difficult to enjoy.

Giving up sensual pleasures,

With no attachment

The wise man should cleanse himself of defilements of the mind.

Favorable conditions for Buddhist art in eastern India

According to *Dīgha Nikāya* unlike Vedic, Buddhist and Jain religion, there exited an community, believing in folk deities viz; *yakṣa, nāgas, vṛkṣa devatās* and other feminine divinities, four guardians deities viz. Dhṛtarāṣṭra of east, Virūḍhaka of the south Virūpākṣa of the west, and Kubera of the north; Sūrya, Yama, Varuṇa and Kubera also served as lieutenant of the four guardians; the *Gandharvas, Garuḍas, Asuras* and *Apsarās*.[13]

The *Mahāsamaya Suttanta* contains an interesting description of a great gathering of gods which included *Yakṣas, Nāgas Garuḍas, Asuras* and the powers of Māra who congratulates creation on his own defeat by Buddha.[14]

Buddhist and Jain texts have references for the cult or shrines of *yakṣas* or *nāgas*. According to Aśvaghoṣa, the famous author of commentaries on several Pali texts, a *chaitya* is a *yakṣa-chaitya* or the abode of a *Yakṣa*. In the *Saṁyuttanikāya* the *Manimala chaitya* in Magadha is said to the haunt of the *yakṣa Maṇibhadra*. In the Pali texts, *yakṣas* mentioned as superhuman beings, also applied to the god Indra, Viṣṇu, and Prajāpati.[15]

The Jain *Aūpapātika Sūtra* gives a vivid account of a *chaitya* in connection with the *Purṇabhadra chaitya* near Champa the capital of Aṅga (south-eastern Bihar), from where a few extracts are given below, "outside this city of Champā, to the north-east there was a sanctuary named *Punnabhadra*. It was of ancient origin, told by men of

former days, old, renowned, rich and well known.... It had daises built in it, and was reverentially adorned with a coating of dry cow dung and bore figures of the five fingered hand printed in *gosirsa* sandal, fresh red sandal, *dardara* sandal". This feature can also be seen at Bharhut where on the *adhiṣṭhāna* part of *āsana* depicts five fingered handprints. (Plate 2.2) The description further continues "There was in it greatly store of ritual pitchers. On its doorways were ritual jars and well fashioned arches... This sanctuary *Pūrṇabhadra* was encompassed round about by a great wood. In this wood was a broad mid space. There in it is related, was a great and fine aśoka tree... Underneath this fine aśoka tree, some what close to its trunk, was it is related, a dais of earthen blocks. It was of goodly proportions as to breadth, length and height...., It was smooth and massive, eight cornered like the face a mirror, narrow, very delightful and variously figured with wolves, bulls, horses, men, dolphins, birds, snakes, dear, yak, oxen, elephants, forest-creepers and *padmaka* creepers."[16]

Railing pillars of Bharhut stūpa have the depiction of *Yakṣa* and *Yakṣī* in large number. (Plate 2.3). Of the sixteen surviving entranceway, eleven columns indicate that each quadrant terminus pillar was carved on three sides with figures of *Yakṣas* and *Yakṣīs*, including the guardian deity of that direction. It reflects that *Yakṣa* and *Yakṣī* worship was common practice in society even before the 3rd century BCE and this practice was adopted in Buddhism also, so much so in later times the statute of Buddha in standing posture were carved in same style as *yakṣa pṛatimā* were carved.

Tree (*Rukkhachetiya)* were worshipped as a symbol of abode of folk-deities, in primitive religion in eastern India, particularly in south and south eastern Bihar, this region was suitable for the development of plastic art.[17] This primitive religion indulged in the symbolic worship such as the *chaitya* which was either a holy tree or groves of trees (*rukkhachetiya, vanachetiya, arāmachetiya* etc.) as it was believed that these trees were the abode of gods or spirits known as *vṛkṣadevatās, yakṣas.*[18]

The word *chaitya* or *chetiya* occurs twice in the inscriptions of Bharhut, the word used for the sacred place or tree or any thing which was considered sacred have been used in the sense of a stūpa; according to Albert Grunwedel "the word *chaitya* is applied to a monument or cenotaph, and in a secondary sense to a temple or shrine containing a *chaitya* or *dhātugarbha.* The name of *chaitya* however, applies not only to sanctuaries but also to sacred trees, holy spots, or other religious monuments.[19] In a short dialogue of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* Buddha explained to the Lichchhavi Vajjis of Vaiśalī the seven conditions of their welfare. Two of these which relates to religion are - "So long as the Lichchhavi-Vajjis honour and esteem and revered and support the Vajjian *chaityas* in the city or out side it, and allow not proper offerings and rites as formerly given and performed to fall into desuetude, so long may the Lichchhavi Vajjis be expected not to decline but to prosper."[20]

Railing necessarily enclosed these shrines, which were initially made up of wood, afforded space for sculptor to engrave the social and religious pictures of their interest, which was the precursor of engraving on stone. In Bharhut stūpa railing, inscribed panels depicts tree within railing as a central object. In one case two lions and six dear are shown seated round the tree with a label *Migasamadika chetiya* (the *chaitya* that gladdens the heart of the wild animals) while in the other panel three elephant pay reverence to a tree bearing the legend *Ambode chetiyam* (Plate 2.4) (The *chaitya* on the *Arbuda* or mount Abu) on the top.[21]

The seven *chaitya* viz., Capāla *chaitya*, Udena *chaitya*, Gotamaka *chaitya*, Sattambaka *chaitya*, Bahuputta *chaitya* and Sarandada *chaitya* and Ānanda *chaitya* at Bhoganagara are specifically mentioned in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.* All these *chaitya*s were visited by Buddha whose love for such shrine manifested itself in his famous predictions on the future of the Vajjian republic, the Lichchhavis being the most famous clan of this confederacy.

The conception of *vṛkṣa chaitya* is very old dating back to the Harappan times; some of the Harappan seals depict the tree within railing. One of these seals depicts tree goddess. It is also depicted on punch-mark coins. *Vṛkṣa chaitya*s were seen on the rail of Bharhut, Sanchi and Mathura stūpa railings. (Plate 2.5) Buddha also prescribed the worship of *chetiya* or *Bodhi* tree. In Kālingabodhi *Jātaka*, Ānanda desires to set up in the *Jetavana* a substitute for the Buddha, the devotees or followers of the blessed one may able to make offerings at *Gaṅdhakuṭī*, even when the Buddha is away from the *Gaṅdhakuṭī* for the discourse of *'dhamma'*. The Buddha asks how many kinds of *chetiya* there are? Ānanda answers three; these are *sārīraka, uddeśika,* and *pāribhogaka.* The Buddha rejected the use of

bodily relics on the obvious ground that such relics can only be venerated after the *parinibbāna*. He rejects the *uddeśika* as such are merely fanciful (*avattukaṁ manamattakaṁ*) so only *Mahābodhi Rrukkha*, that has been associated with a Buddha is fit to be a *chetiya*.[22]

Stūpa as a symbolic way of worshiping Buddha

In Buddhism stūpa worship was started somewhere with the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of Buddha. The Buddhist adopted the practice of raising stūpa, following a custom already in vogue, immediately after his death. *Mahāvastu Avadāna*[23], the *Lokottaravādin Vinaya* of the *Mahāsāṅghika* School, lays special emphasis on Buddha *bhakti* and enunciated the devotion and worship of Buddha and to stūpa, which contains his relics, with a view not only to accomplish mundane happiness but also to attain *nirvāṇa*. Stūpa of Piprahawa, Vaiśāli and Lauriya Nandangarh belong to pre Aśokan period. Early form of stūpa is available in the several reliefs of Sanchi and Bharhut stūpa. (Plate 2.6)

Emergence of symbols

The symbolic representation is not a Buddhist invention, but represents the survival of an older tradition. Thus, Buddhist art before 3rd century BCE also finds its impression in the form of stūpa and sacred Buddhist symbols, which were found on punch mark coins, such as worship of *Bodhi* tree as also depicted in Bharhut, Sanchi and Amaravati stūpa. During this time Buddhist art was purely in symbolic form. It had, therefore to express itself through the language of symbols, which are mostly those, which had been popular in the Vedic period. The auspicious symbols such as *pūrṇaghaṭa*, *bhadra kalaśa*, swastika, *śrīvatsa*, *śrīvṛkṣa* and *padma*, (Plate 2.7) find mention in the Vedic and later works. *Saṁhitās* are stocked with references, which suggest that the Vedic people had a rich taste and the use of motifs in houses and other public places was in common practice. The number of such decorative motifs and symbols are countless and these belongs to different categories like divine, conceptual, birds, animals, trees, creepers, ornaments, ritualistic and other types. The Vedic motifs continued in later period, in one way or the other.[24]

According to Coomaraswamy, "In the Vedic period symbols were the means of the representation of god and goddess and their manifold aspects. These symbols were necessary for the proper performances of the ancient Vedic rites." It may be assumed that the group of associated symbols includes other aniconic representations such as the wheel, feet, *triśūla* (*nandi pada*) (Plate 2.8) and other geometrical, vegetative, or even theriomorphic forms are visible in early Buddhist art, and the symbol of tree is earlier than Buddhist applications, and one may understand the objections made accordingly.[25]

The *Śatapatha Brāhamaṇa* mentions that in piling of the fire altar, a disc foil of gold were placed on it representing the sun. In the Buddhist texts also *śrīvatsa*, (Plate 2.9) swastika, *nandyāvarta*, *chakra*, *padma*, *triratna* has been referred as auspicious symbols. In the *Lalitavistara* prince Siddhārtha's hair were styled as *śrīvatsa*. The same source narrates the story of Sujātā cooking *pāyasa* wherein many auspicious symbols like swastika, *nandyavarta*, *padma* formed alternately in the boiling milk. The text follows as "*tasmin khelvati kṣīre śrīvatsa, swastika, nandyāvarta, padma, vardhamāna, ādīni mangalyāni sandṛśyate soma.*"[26]

The findings of numbers of symbol on punch-mark coins, which reappear, in architectural members and on sculptures; have a meaning and purpose. The punch mark coins, are the earliest in the numismatic series, constitute a rich repertoire of symbols, they are about five hundred in numbers.[27] The date of these coins are well known (C.800-200 BCE). The Pali literature refers the circulation of these coins during the time of King Bimbisara when Rājagṛaha was the capital in the sixth century BCE.[28] Origin as traced by Cunningham was prior to 1000 BCE, their appearance on the faces of various peculiar marks may be explained as an example of many symbols of the great celestial luminary.[29] The commonest symbols are the hollow-cross, crescent topped three-arched hill, tree-in railing, swastika, *taurine*, and bull and elephant among the animals. A beautiful copper plate of Mauryan period from Sahgaura, district Gorakhpur records an administrative order of a provincial officer during third century BCE characters, on the top, *chaitya-gṛha*, tree-in-railing, crescent-on-hill, *sthambha* etc., represents typical Buddhist symbols as punched on punch mark coins of 3rd century BCE.

The motifs were common in Hinduism and Jainism and were also adopted by Buddhism as their sacred symbols, to describe the events from the life of Buddha. D.B. Spooner in his report on Peshawar coins emphasises on their religious significance. He suggests that five of the

symbols constantly associated together are Buddhist in character like sun, wheel, branch of a tree, stūpa, humped bull before a taurine and a central sphere supporting three *chhatras* with intervening taurine.[30]

Probably Buddhist symbolized the great events of Buddha's life by adopting sacred signs. The four great animals (*mahā ājaneya paśu*), which were sacred was inherited by Buddhists, the earliest traces of which may be seen in the Indus valley and the *Ṛgvedic* texts.[31]

Some of them have long continuity from proto-historic period, such the worship of swastika and tree (many Harappan seals depicts tree within railing and swastika). Some of the symbols were popular from the Vedic times like lotus. *Buddha Charita*, while describing the *mahāpuruṣa lakṣana* of Buddha mentions that, "With his hand whose fingers were united with a membrane and which was marked with the auspicious swastika and with its middle part curved".[32] In other description it says "Thus the great seer beheld the king's son with wonder, - his foot marked with a wheel, his fingers and toes webbed, with a circle of hair between his eyebrows, and signs of vigour like an elephant.[33] Aśoka also considered them as sacred symbols and utilised some of them, such as elephant; horse, bull, lion and *chakra*, in his symbolic monumental art. Later on these symbols were depicted on Sanchi, Bharhut, Amravati, Pauni, Bodhgaya stūpas as a popular Buddhist symbols. (Plate 2.10) According to A. Foucher these coins were minted for the use of pilgrims.[34]

The association of *chakra* with the Buddha and Buddhism is well known. As it symbolises the event of *dharma chakra pravartana (Mahā Sudassana Suttanta, Dīgha Nikāya)* which automatically destroys the evil and darkness. It is also mentioned in one of the hymn of *Ṛgveda*.[35] In the sense of the wheel of sun's chariot denotes time. The word *chakra* has been used for a chariot wheel as well as a weapon of Indra. In *Mahābhārata*, Viṣṇu is known as the *chakradhara*.[36] The *chakra* was also an important symbol in the Jainism, Ādinātha, the first *Tīrthaṅkara* and twenty second *Tīrthaṅkara* Neminath were also associated with *chakra*.[37] Later on it also appears on punch mark coins, Sarnath pillar capital, Bharhut, Sanchi Stūpa No.I, II, and III (Plate 2.11)

Tree worship was deep rooted even during the proto-historic times. Its prevalence in chalcolithic period may be seen on several potsherds, seals and sealing.[38] Some Harappan seals and early Indian coinage show various representations of similar types of sacred trees. *Ṛgveda, Atharvaveda, Chhandogya Upaniṣad* and *Purāṇas* refers about sacred and celestial tree. V.S. Agrawala refers, that the tree symbol represents *kalpa-vrikṣa*, which was churned out as one of the fourteen jewels from the ocean.[39] In the Buddhist and Jain literature the tree have been considered as sacred. The association of the *Aśvatha* (*Ficus vreligiosa*) with *Śākyamuni* Buddha and the various other trees like *puṇḍarīka, śirīśa, pāṭali, nyagrodha* and their predecessors were not the special feature of the Buddhist creed alone; these *bodhi* tree were the descendants of the *chaitya vṛkṣas* (*rukkhachetiyani*) of primitive times. The continuity of tree worship in Indian art is well attested by the sculptures at Bharhut and Sanchi.

The word *Pūrṇa kumbha* have been mentioned in *Ṛgveda Atharvaveda and Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā*. The earliest reference to *pūrṇa kalaśa* is in the *Ṛgveda* , where the pot full of water appears to be connected with Indra, the god of rain. In another hymn, it mentions that 'Overflowing is the vase of the *yajamāna*, glory to him. As a bounteous power have I filled up the cup for you all to drink....[40] The motif of *pūrṇa Kumbha* are abundantly appears at Bharhut and Sanchi stūpas.

Fourth rock edict of Aśoka

In the fourth rock edict of Aśoka a passage reflects how Buddhist art was flourishing during pre Aśokan times. "...Abstention from slaughter of life, absence of cruelty to living creatures and *Śramṇas*, obedience to mother and father, and obedience to the aged have increased now, owing to the instruction in *dharma* imparted by king *Priyadarśī* beloved of God, to such a degree as was not possible to achieve for many hundreds of years in the past by means of showing to the people the representations of celestial cars and celestial elephants, masses of hell-fire and other divine figures as well as many other heavenly forms".[41]

(***Aja Devanāmpiyasa Piyadasino rāño dhamā-charanena bherighoso aho dhamaghoso vimāna dasanā ca hassi-dasanā ca agi-khamdāni ca añāni divyāni ca rūpāni dasayitpā***).

Hultzsch suggests that the figures of elephants stands for the celestial elephants, the usual vehicles of the four

mahārājas or *lokapālas*, as mentioned above, *agikhamdhāni*, according to him, it might have taken in the sense of radiant beings of other world, and *divyāni rupāni* means the gods in effigy (images of gods).[42] Aśoka in this edict discards the age old method of showing the people in gathering of the celestial elephant, celestial chariot/ *vimāna, āgikhand* and images of gods etc. These methods of propagations of *dhamma* were prevailing during or before the time of Aśoka, which he discarded. These forms of divine depiction might have been executed in wood or other perishable materials.

Many of these divine spectacles find expression in the post- Mauryan art tradition e.g. The Sudharma *devasabhā* (celestial hall) in Bharhut *vedikā*, divine elephant in the depiction of Maya's dream as a symbolic representation of Bodhisattva in Bharhut *vedikā* and Sanchi *toraṇa* and flaming pillars in Amaravati sculptural art. This edict suggests that prior to the 3rd century BCE, Buddhist art was a symbolic in conformity with the Vedic tradition[43] and was carved in some perishable material.

Buddha's statute in his life time according to the Chinese travellers' account

Later tradition represents the Buddha being not merely sanctioned but it instituted the use of anthropomorphic images. (*Divyāvadāna*) Rudrāyaṇa (Udāyana) the desires mean making of offerings to the Buddha, in absentia; the blessed one said "Have images of the *Tathāgata* drawn on canvas, and make your offering thereto" (*Tathāgata-pratimām paṭe likhāpayitvā*). Rudrāyaṇa calls his painters (*chittakāra*). They say, that they cannot grasp the blessed one's exemplum (*na śaknuvanti bhagavato nimittam udgrahītum).* The blessed one says that it is because they are affected by lassitude, but "bring me a piece of canvas" (*api tu paṭakam ānaya*). Then the blessed one projected his similitude upon it (*tatra.... chāyā utsṛṣṭā*), and said "complete it with colours" (*raṅgaiḥ Pūrayata*), adding that certain texts are to be written (*likhitavyāni*) below. And so "everything was by them depicted according to prescription" (*yathāsaṁdiṣṭaṁsarvam abhilikhitam*).[44]

According to the records of Chinese travellers, some of the Buddha's images were modelled during the time of Buddha himself. The earliest of them, mentioned by Fahien was a sandal wood image, prepared by the order of king Prasenajit of Kośala during the Buddha's visit to *trayastriṁśa* heaven, and was approved by the Buddha being a faithful copy of himself. It is also added that he instructed to serve the future sculptures and architects for the carving his images.[45]

When Buddha ascended in to the *Trayastriṁśa* heaven to preach for the sake of his mother, after ninety day's absence, king Prasenajit desired to see him, carved out of the sandalwood image called *Gośīrṣa chandana* (ox-head) of the Buddha was placed on Buddha's throne. When Buddha returned and entered the *vihāra*, the image, immediately quitting its place, went forward to meet him, on this Buddha addressed these words to it: 'return, I pray you, to your seat, after my *nirvāṇa*, you will be the model from which my followers shall carve their images.' On this the figure returned to its seat. This image, being the first figure of Buddha, was the one, which in all subsequent ages was followed as a model.[46] Since, these records were of later tradition hence may not be treated as reliable.

Summary

(1) Pre-Buddhist India took pleasure in varying symbols; altar and sacred metres were their most learned models. Foucher connects Buddhist aniconism to the general absence of images in Vedic India.

(2) According to Paul Müs at the beginning, a wheel seems to be a sufficient clear image of the first preaching or, as the texts say, the first turning of the 'Wheel of Law'. A wheel continued to indicate the presence of the master on more complete images where, the progress made in technique, the scene of the preaching is made more precise. [47]

(3) Symbols prevailed in depicting the Buddhist themes, which were already prevailing in the contemporary society as popular and sacred symbols. Numismatic evidences shows stūpa, elephant, horse and tree within railing and *chakra.* The arguments of expression prior to the images were the symbolic in its supportive forms.

(4) Worship of *vṛkṣa chaityas* was adopted by Buddhism as worship of *bodhi* tree. The Jain text of 6th century BCE proves the tradition of *vṛkṣa chaityas* worship in eastern India. Bharhut and Sanchi stūpa also depicts the scenes of worship of *bodhi* tree. Which are foreseeable, the pre-Buddhist tradition predetermined the evolution of Buddhism.

(5) Installation of railing around the stūpa was started in wooden material. All such objects and places of primitive worship were enclosed for protection with wooden railings, which might have given the people the scope for displaying of their artistic and decorative instincts.[48]

(6) Early Buddhist art, followed the Indian aniconic tradition and adopt the symbolic representation of Buddhist theme. That too in perishable material hence we don't find any remains of art object of this phase.

(7) Though the records of Chinese travellers mentions of the wooden figure of Buddha, but these records follow the later tradition and hence seem to be un reliable.

(8) The period marked with the several important events like first and second Buddhist council, several monasteries were constructed during the time of Buddha. But the art activities remained limited.

While describing the art and architecture of India prior to the Aśokan period, S.P. Gupta quotes "One important point that emerges from the illustration is that, it is from the NBP ware levels, i.e., 6th-5th century BCE that technology diversification takes place; bone, ivory, semi-precious stones and metals particularly iron are now used. It must also be seen that, it is around the beginning of the middle of phase of this ware; around 450 BCE that coinage, starts in form of the punch mark coins....The birth of coin is the birth of the organized economic order... It may be seen that it is also from this point of time that plastic art reappears and people start moving towards monumental structure. Fortified towns of the 4th century BCE if not 5th century are known from sites like Kauśāmbi and Rājagṛiha... stūpa's are also built in the 5th century BCE, with mud to begin with... Taking the dates backward, by the time the Nandas come to the throne of Magadha, the society's economic order had already started getting organized, it only needed a more determined will, for a real take off. And the Mauryan rulers provided it".[49]

Buddhist art during 3rd century BCE

Coronation of Aśoka the great, on the throne of Magadha Empire in 273 BCE was a milestone not only for Buddhist religion, but also for art as well. According to K. P. Jaiswal, Aśokan reign fell between 274-234 BCE.[50] Though in the Śisunāga-Nanda period had already provided a solid foundation to early Buddhist art, but Aśoka proves to be great builder, who gave a new shape to Indian art. When Aśoka assumed the throne he continued the policy of conquest followed by his grandfather Chandragupta Maurya and father Biṅdusāra.

The Mauryan king Aśoka (273-232 BCE) was converted to Buddhism, after his bloody conquest on Kaliṅga (present Orissa) in the East of India, The Kaliṅga was conquered by king Priyadarśī, eight years after his coronation. Vincent Smith, in fact, regards the Kaliṅga war 'as one of the decisive events in the history of the world.' The edict narrates, 'Kaliṅga was conquered by his sacred and gracious majesty when he had been consecrated eight years. 150,000 persons were thence carried away captive, many times that numbers died. Directly, after the annexation of the Kaliṅga began His sacred majesty's zealous protection of the law of piety, his love of the law. Thus, the desire of his sacred majesty's remorse for having conquered the Kaliṅgas, because the conquest of a country previously unconquered involves the slaughter, death, and carrying away captive of the people. That is a matter of profound sorrow, sadness and regret to his sacred majesty. Having under gone a change of heart and realized the truth, the king decided to renounce violence, and to propagate the faith by building stūpas and pillars urging for the respect of all animal life, and enjoining people to follow the *dharma*." [51]

He follows the saying of Buddha "putting away the killing of living things, Gotma the recluse holds aloof from the destruction of life. He has laid the cudgel and the sword aside, and ashamed of roughness, and full of mercy, he dwells compassionate and kind to all creatures that have life" mentioned in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*.[52]

There are indeed some similarities between Aśoka's teachings and the Buddha's instructions to a householder's son named Śṛigāla as found in the canonical work entitled *Dīgha Nikāya*.[53]

Propagation of *Dhamma*

The *Divyāvadāna* tells us that after his conversion to Buddhism, he undertook building of 84000 stūpas, The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang records the religious tradition

which he heard in India that the relics were deposited through out the empire on one and the same day at a given hour. The appointed time was at or after midday when the face of the sun darkened. (Which the Buddhist monks in later ages attributed to a miracle of Upagupta, Asoka's teacher) M. Robert Fazy rightly regards this as the description of a solar eclipse. T. R. Von Oppolzer calculated a date of solar eclipses for over thirty centuries gives the 4th May 248 BCE.[54]

He tried to check corruption and schism in the *saṅgha.* The Sarnath pillar edict which was addressed to the *Mahāmātras* of Pāṭaliputra says, "The *saṅgha* cannot be divided by any means. But indeed that monks and nuns who shall breakup the *saṅgha*, should be caused to put on white robes. Instruction was also issued to the *Mahāmātras* of Kauśāmbī and in the Sanchi version it is preceded by the declaration. The *saṅgha* both of monks and the nuns is made united as long as my sons and great grandsons (shall reign) and as long as the moon and the sun (shall shine)."[55]

He also under took pilgrimages to religious Buddhist places as Buddha himself declares (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*) that after the total extinction there are four places proper to be visited by the community, and these "places which should stir deep feeling" (*saṁvejanīyāniṭhāni ṭhānāni*). Rock edict VIII and pillar inscriptions I-II describes of Aśoka's pilgrimage; it was under the influence of 'Upagupta' that he started on a pilgrimage to places hallowed by the memory of the Buddha.[56]

Aśokan pillars and other Sculptures

Buddhist art during Aśoka's period has unique in characteristics because, it is stimulated by king's own strong zeal. Under the guidance of his religious teacher "Upagupta" (Moggaliputta tissa) Aśoka devoted his whole life (after the war of Kaliṅga) to Buddha, *dharma* and *saṅgha.* His zeal, devotion, dedication towards Buddhist religion and eagerness to create some thing unique for the Buddhist religion resulted several animals crowned, high, sparkling pillars which he erected in several parts of his empire, unique shining, caves at Barbara, stūpa made of burnt bricks containing Buddha's relics (at Sarnath, Sanchi, Amaravati, Taxila etc.), intricately carved Buddha's *vajrāsana* at Boddhgaya, half front portion of elephant carved out of living rock, though not polished, at Dhauli, monolithic *harmikā* of Dharmarajika stūpa at Sarnath, polished chunar sand stone *chhatra* for Sanchi stūpa, engraving of an elephant with a Brāhmī inscription *Gajatame*, on the rock at Kalasi carrying Aśokan edicts.

Pillars of Aśoka symbolises the Buddha. In this regard a reference can be given from the *Buddha Charita*, It mentions that "As soon as he (the Buddha) was born the thousand-eyed (Indra) well-pleased took him gently, bright like a golden pillar; and two pure streams of water fell down from heaven upon his head with piles of *mañdāra* flower.[57]

Hiuen Tsang saw fifteen pillars of Aśoka, one at Saṅkisā, two at Jetvana, two at Kapilavastu, one at Lumbini, two at Kuśīnagara one on the way of Sarnath one at Sarnath, one at Mahāśāla, one at Vaiśālī, two at Pāṭalīputra and one at Rājagṛiha.[58] It is supposed that Aśoka erected pillars along the highway. Thus the pillar at Kolhua (Bakhira, Lauriya-Araraj, and Rampurvā have been thought to mark the road to Nepal from Pāṭalīputra. [59] According to Radha Kumud Mookerji[60] pillars of Aśoka were erected in front of stūpas. A. Ghosh also strongly recommended the same view. Other art work remains of Aśoka comprise stūpa of brick and mortar, though a few of them have survived today.

On the basis of art style we can place this capital in chronological order. The shaft of Bakhira pillar is heavy and shorter in length; represent crude and rough workmanship. Where as its square and plain abacus also suggest its earlier date compared to other capitals. Moreover, animals appear to be uncomfortably sitting on the abacus. The abacus is plain and lacking an integral relation with the inverted lotus below. Execution of lion capital is also crude and rough. The length of the pillar is roughly about 14.60 mts. including its capital. Cunningham calculated its weight measuring 51 tons which will certainly make it the heaviest off all the lion monoliths.[61] Lion figure has been shown lively and in roaring with protruding tongue.

Elephant crowned Saṅkisā column shows rough workmanship, heavy shape and clumsy form. But the abacus has been elaborately carved with rosettes and palmetts its petal resembles with the serpent hood, S.P. Gupta suggests a name for it "*Nāgapuṣpa*".[62] According to him "the palmetts of the pillars are thoroughly an Indianised form of west Asian motif i.e. Honeysuckle. In between the legs of elephant the space carved with arch type design. According to Nihar Ranjan Ray abacus and hill type design both are

crude and are presumable translated from wooden designs; the border decoration is particularly reminiscent of wood. The shape of abacus now changes from square to round create a good harmony between crowning animal and inverted lotus.

The decoration on the abacus consists of the *nāgpuṣpa* or honey suckles or *muchukunda* flower[63] flanked by stems with flowers and buds, in-between is the *triratna* like motif engraved. On the lower side there is design like reel and bead. The abacus and the inverted lotus seem to be more improved.

The Rampurva pillar has been surmounted by magnificently carved young bull in its natural and energetic form. The carver has successfully carved the muscles on the body of bull in a very natural way. The round decorated abacus shows honeysuckle or *Nāgapuṣpa* motif with flowers. The bull looks very calm and quite but in his full energetic form.

The capital of Lauriyā Nandangarh consists of a vigorous lion with full of strength. The round abacus is decorated with row of *haṁsas* or pecking geese and inverted lotus below. Below the abacus is carved a cable design and on the lower part, a double zone of reel and bead. Rampurva lion capital is similar to the lion capital of Lauriya. Lion sitting on the round abacus is carved natural and powerful pose. Abacus is decorated with pecking gees in low relief below a plain cord and then inverted lotus.

Sarnath pillar is one of the most beautifully and skilfully carved Aśokan pillar. Aśokan art has reached its zenith and shows highest perfection of Aśokan art. A four lions sitting back to back surmount a wheel with 32 spokes, and round abacus carved with four animals i.e. lion, horse, bull and elephant for movement between each animal a wheel is carved in high relief. Lions sitting back to back carved in roaring pose with swallowing muscles and clowns with sharp nails. The animal relief on the abacus is worked out in bold and high relief. A galloping horse with high spirit in movement while the elephant slowly strides forward, bull and lion also galloping ahead with full vigour.

The magnificent Sarnath capital discovered in 1905 is one of the best specimens of Aśokan sculptural art. The pillar was erected to mark the place where Buddha first 'turned the wheel of Law'. The four lions sitting back to back on the abacus once supported a stone wheel, two feet nine inches in diameter. Commenting on the art of the lion capital Sir John Marshall has observed, "The Sarnath capital, on the other is a masterpiece and the product of the most developed art of which the world cognizant in the 3rd century BCE. the handiwork of one who had generations of artistic efforts and experience behind him".

Strong crowned lions with their swollen veins and tense muscular development in the spirited form of the relief below has no trace of imitation of primitive art. So far as naturalism was his aim, the sculpture has model the figures sculptures has inclination towards nature, and consciously he has infused a tectonic conventional spirit in to the four lions, so as to bring them in to harmony with the architectural character of the monument.

Sir John Marshall considers it as the finest carving that India has yet produced and unsurpassed by anything of its kind in the ancient world. 'The four lions seated back-to-back perhaps suggested expansion of Buddha's message (first sermon) in all the four quarters. The four wheels on the abacus along with four animals associated with four directions also indicated the same idea. The crowning wheel (now missing) on it indicates the actual turning of the 'Wheel of Law' According to M.C. Joshi, "Perhaps Aśoka himself was responsible for symbolizing the event by shaping a memorial pillar in to a *Chkradhvaja*....."[64]

The Sanchi capital pillar is some what replica of Sarnath capital but its abacus is similar to that of Rampurva lion capital with a row of pecking gees done in higher and bolder relief with the depiction of *Nāgapuṣpa* or the honeysuckle motif, four lion seated back to back with protruding tongue swallowed muscles and sharpened nails in roaring pose looks dynamic and full of strength. According to N.R. Ray, the pillar of the Sanchi, counterpart of Sarnath belongs to the same style and is equally conventional and stylized.[65] The manes of the lion are rendered with increasing schematisation, perhaps an indication of a date, which is later, than that of Sarnath.

Vajrāsana is a long stone seat placed below the *Bodhi* tree at Bodhgaya. The top of the seat is carved in geometric pattern like intersecting circles. The sides of the seat are carved with honeysuckle motif with rosettes and alternating with pecking geese resembling with the abacus of Sanchi capital.

The rock-cut elephant at Dhauli (district Bhubneshwar) is carved out of live rock in the tenth reignal year of Aśoka, before the erection of the pillars. The Dhauli elephant appears as emerging from the depth of the cave. Rock also bears the famous Kaliṅga edict of Aśoka. Figure is roundly carved; monumental in size shows linear rhythm and plasticity. It is very lively and its natural depiction shows symbolicly Buddha coming down to earth. It symbolises the birth of the Buddha as the elephant of Maya's dream.

The Barabar and Nagarjuni hills are situated about 25 to 30 kilometres north of the city of Gaya. Seven caves were excavated in these hills during the Mauryan period. The caves were excavated during the reign of Aśoka and Daśaratha. Three caves in Nagarjuni hills bear inscription of Daśaratha and three out of four caves on Barabar hill bear inscription of Aśoka. Door facade of the Lomas Ṛṣi cave shows translation in terms of stone from wooden originals. The elephants are carved in high relief and in full plastic form. The most interesting cave is Lomas Ṛṣi cave in the Barabar hills probably excavated by Aśoka. It is modelled after wooden architecture, translating the facade of a freestanding door of a building in to the stone. It proves that ancient India has an elaborate and lengthy history of wooden architecture prior to the Mauryan period. The entrance of the Lomas Ṛṣi cave shows two pillars supporting the roof and leaning inward. Within the arched form above the door are two separate bands.

The first upper band is carved with latticework (like wooden lattice work for passing the air and light inside the building). The second lower band is carved with a frieze of elephants in pairs approaching towards a stūpa. Stylistic *Makara* (crocodile) are shown on both the end. As stated earlier there are four caves in Barabara hills which are Lomas Ṛṣi, Sudāmā cave, Viśvakaramā cave, Karṇa-choper cave. At the right jamb of Karṇa-choper cave at the entrance is an inscription, which, is defaced, has five lines, and refers to the dedication of the cave in the nineteenth reignal years of Aśoka. According to it, the cave was called *sypiya* and the hill was called Khalatika as also Pravaragiri. The inscription reads "When king *Priyadarśī* had been anointed nineteenth years, this cave in the very pleasant Khalatika Mountain was given by me for the shelter during the rainy season. Nagarjuni hills are located a kilometre east of the Barabar hills. It has three rock- cut caves, each bearing an inscription of king Daśaratha dedicated to the Ājīvikas, consist Gopi cave, Vāpi cave, Vaḍathika cave. Lomas Ṛṣi cave is a perfect example to connect the Buddhist art of Maurya to that of the Śuṅga.

Roots of Mauryan Art from Vedic Art

V.S. Agrawal strongly feels that the art of Mauryas was inspired by the Vedic art. His ideas are based on the literary sources of Vedic times and post Vedic times. He analysed Sarnath pillar in details, associated it with the concept of cosmic pillar styled as *Skambha* in the *Atharvaveda.*[66] Citing the *Brihadāraṇyaka Upniṣad*, he also equates life principal with a post (*Prāṇah Sthūṇa*) *Skambhan* is referred to in the *Atharvaveda* as the cosmic pillar, the support of existence.

Commenting on Sarnath pillar he said, each part of Sarnath pillar truly rooted in Indian soil and the entire indigenous tradition stands up as the source, which produced the Aśokan column. *Dharma Chakra* on the top was known from the Vedic times as *Brahma-Chakra, Kāla-Chakra*, and the whole cosmos was conceived in terms of the rotating wheel. The four-addorssed lions symbolize the mighty power of *Chakravartin* king, as the king was considered to be a tiger or lion in his kingdom and in the coronation ceremony he was made to sit on a lion's seat. Four animals and the four *Chakras* on the abacus are as at Sarnath and apparently on other Aśokan pillar, is not an isolated phenomena of Mauryan times but has a history from the Indus valley civilization till the nineteenth century, both in art and literature. According to him the inverted lotus is the full vase or *pūrṇa ghaṭa* on the top of the shaft with long overflowing leaves. The *pūrṇa ghaṭa* or *pūrṇa kalaśa* is mentioned in the *Ṛgveda, Atharvaveda,* Jain and Buddhist literature. [67]

Assessing the Aśokan art Vincent A. Smith opines, "During Aśoka's reign of about forty-one years (273 to 232 BCE) he replaced the wooden walls and buildings of his capital by permanent works in masonry and caused hundreds of fine edifices in both brick and stone to be erected through out the empire. So astonishing was his activity as a builder that people after ages could not believe his constructions to be the work of human agency....."[68]

Symbolism of Buddhist art in Aśokan sculptures

According to Radha Kumud Mookerji, "The Aśokan pillars are full of Buddha, a study in symbolism, in the art

of indirect representation in place of a direct portraiture. It was this art and artistic convention, which we find copied and elaborated in the later sculptures of Bharhut and Sanchi."[69] Figures of animal surmounting the pillars symbolises the Buddha or the event related to the life of Buddha. These animals are lion, bull, elephant and horse. The Basarh-Bakhira, Lauriya Nandangarh, Rampurva, Sanchi and Sarnath pillars are crowned by single or multiple figures of lion, the Saṅkisā column and another pillar at Rampurva bear on them the figures of an elephant and a bull respectively. All these animals along with the horse are again figured on the abacus of the Sarnath capital. These animals are associated with Buddha.

Elephant is carved on pillar capital at Saṅkisā and independent sculpture carved out of a live rock at Dhauli and line drawing on the north face of a rock at Kalsi. The Kalsi figure is accompanied by an inscription which regards *"Gajatame"* (best elephant). Also the word *"Seto"* - The white one at the end of the sixth rock edict at Dhauli and the phrase referring to the white elephant below the thirteenth rock edict at Girnar (*sarvasveto hasti sarva-loka-sukhāhara nāma*), and Gajottame of Rock Edict XIII at Girnar and Kalsi.[70] Later on elephant carrying lotuses depicted on the railings of Sanchi stūpa No.1 and with sleeping queen Maya dreaming about elephant on the railing of Bharhut and Sanchi stūpa No.I symbolising his conception in mother's womb. **(Plate 2.13)**

There is no doubt that the white elephant in this depiction is Buddha, represented symbolically. It is well known that the Buddha was often indicated by the figure of an elephant in early Indian art. In this regard Aśvaghoṣa in *Buddha Charita* mentions that "...the most excellent of Bodhisattvas suddenly entered at a thought in to her womb, like the *nāga*-king entering the cave of Nandā. Assuming the form of a huge elephant white like Himalaya, armed with six tusks, with his face perfumed with flowing ichors, he entered the womb of the queen of king Śuddhodana, to destroy the evils of the world.[71]

According to another mythical tradition regarding this theriomorphic form of Buddha met with in the *Mahāvastu Avadāna* where Śuddhodana saw in a dream an elephant running out of Kapilavastu and this was interpreted by the lokapālas to mean that his holy son would leave his city.[72]

The descent of the Bodhisattva into womb of his mother in the form of an elephant is referred to in texts like the *Dīgha Nikāya* and the *jātakas.*[73] In *Buddha Charita* while describing the conception of Buddha in his mother's womb, Aśvaghoṣa narrates, "Assuming the form of a huge elephant white like Himalaya, armed with six tusks, with his face perfumed with flowing ichors, he entered the womb of the queen of King Śuddhodana, to destroy the evils of the world.[74]

In another place he mentioned that "thus the great seer (The Buddha) beheld the king's son with wonder, his foot marked with a wheel, his fingers and toes webbed, with a circle of hair between his eyebrows, and signs of vigor like an elephant."[75]

In one place, he writes "Having heard of the delightful appearance of the city groves beloved by the women, he resolved to go out of doors, like an elephant long shut up in a house."[76] When the Bodhisattva left the city and departed to the forest, his father Śuddhodana with grief said, "Let us go this very day into that forest, whither he is gone, whose gait is like the king of elephants; without him we have no whish to live, like the senses when the souls depart."[77] In later period it is more clearly depicted in Bharhut where the Buddha is shown as an elephant entering in the womb of his mother and a label; attached to it says the lord descends in to the womb of his mother (*Bhagavato Ūkramti*).

The bull symbolizes his birth almost always flanked by his zodiacal emblem, **(Plate 2.14)** incarnated the traditional date of the birth, the day of full moon of the month *vaiśākha* on the other occasions, but more rarely, the bull is replaced by an elephant, plastic reminder of the conception,[78] and later symbolises *Śākya simha* or Buddha him self.

A number of times, Buddha is represented by bull in Buddhist texts, in his aunt dream the master appeared as a bull running out of the imperial city with bellowing and a similar explanation of the significance of the dream that Bodhisattva would renounce the world was given by the *lokapālas.* His nativity is said to have taken place in the zodiac sign Taurus (*vṛṣa).*[79]

In *Buddha Charita* Buddha is called as bull of *Śākyas.* When Buddha having seen the different kinds of penances practiced by the ascetics in that sacred grove, desires to know the truth. "Than the Brahman, well-versed in penance

told that bull of *Śākyas*, a very bull in prowess, all the various kinds of penance and the fruit thereof".[80]

In another place Aśvaghoṣa compared Buddha's eyes with that of bull, "With his long arms with lion-gait, his bull like eye, and his beauty bright like gold, his broad chest, and his deep voice as a drum or a cloud...."[81]

When Buddha reached Rājagṛha, after great renunciation Aśvaghoṣa describes that, "His splendid beauty, surpassing all other men, the people of that region were astonished at him who has a bull as his sign and is immovable in his vow." [82]

The association of the elephant and horse with Buddha is reiterated in another story, immediately after the birth of the Buddha there appeared 500 elephants with *chandana* at their head and an equal number of horses with Kaṅthaka as their leader. Horse reminiscent of Siddhartha's favorite horse Kaṅthaka, symbolizes the great renunciation of the master who was riding on his animal left the city in quest of truth.[83]

The affection of Kaṅthaka with Buddha is well expressed in *Buddha Charita*. He is mentioned as noblest among the horses, in one place it is mentioned that, "he like the horse of Indra, the lord of bay horses, hurrying on as if spurred in his mind, went over the leagues full of many conflicting emotionsà" when Buddha was leaving for the ascetic life, It is mentioned in the same text that "....having heard his words, Kaṅthaka, the noblest of steeds, licked his feet with his tongue and dropped hot tears.

The prince stroked him and addressed like a friend, shed no tears, Kaṅthaka, this perfect equine nature has been proved, bear with it, this labor will soon have its fruit." [84]

It has been suggested that the Rummindei pillar once bore the figure of a horse.[85] The great renunciation is beautifully carved in stūpa No. I at Sanchi, even the stūpa No. II also depicted this scene but it is not narrative. **(Plate 2.15)**

Four animals according to a Buddhist legend, the *Anotatta* Lake where Gautama used to bath, had four *mukha* associated with these four animals as *sihamukha, vesabha mukha, hastimukha and assamukha.*[86] These four animals are depicted on the abacus of Sarnath pillar.

His mother Māyā Devī on the day of her conception dreamt that she has been brought to the lake where she bathed in the water, the interpretation of the dream was that she would give birth to a virtuous son. The movement of Buddha has been compared with that of a lion, bull as well as elephant. [87]

The Buddha has been conspicuously described as *śākya - siṁha* lion of the race. In *Buddha Charita* it is mentioned that, "This is not to be called a strange thing for thee, born as thou art in the great family whose ensign is the lion..." While his association is with lion under lying expression like *Śākya siṁha* or *puruṣa siṁha* are well known. In *Buddha Charita* Buddha is compared with the lion, while he said, "I am born for supreme knowledge, for the welfare of the world, thus this is my last birth, lion gait, gazing at the four quarters, utter a voice full of auspicious meaning.[88]

When, the Buddha for the first time entered forest, the text narrates that "the prince with a gait like the lion's having entered that arena of deer, himself like a deer, by the beauty of his person, even though bereft of his magnificence, attracted in their heads half head bent down.[89]

Whereas, four lions sitting back to back similar to the Sarnath pillar surmounted on the Sanchi pillar, symbolizes the *Śākya siṁha* Buddha delivering his messages in the all four directions.[90] **(Plate 2.16)**

In his previous births he was born as lion (*Vyāghra bhūta yaśodharā jātaka*), bull (*vṛiṣabha jātaka*), and elephant (*Chhaddanta jātaka*).[91]

Wheel on Sarnath pillar consisted of thirty two spokes symbolises the Buddha himself the very embodiment of his own *dharmaśarīra*, endowed with thirty two chief signs of the super human being as told by Buddha in *Kūtadanta Sutta.*[92]

In the *Milindapañho*, Milinda propounds; Just as the lotus with a hundred petals, though born of the mud, bears no likeness to it either in colour, in odour, in flavour, so the blessed one who is endowed with thirty two major bodily marks of a great man, adorned with eighty minor marks, of golden complexion, with brilliant skin, and radiant with an aureole, is born of parents who are lacking in those marks, and the rest.[93] **(Plate 2.17)**

Vajrāsana at Boddhagaya symbolises the great event, meditative Buddha under *Bodhi* tree to attain the enlightenment. It is beautifully carved stone āsan at Bodhgaya by Aśoka and later on *Vajrāsana* was a common depiction at Bharhut and Sanchi. **(Plate 2.18)**

Pecking geese as depicted on the abacus of pillars of Sanchi, Lauriya-Nandangarh, (Plate 2.19) and Rampurva capital and on the *Vajrāsana* also symbolically represent religious vows preached by Buddha. In *Buddha Charita* a passage narrates that "The thirsty world of living beings will drink the flowing stream of his law, bursting forth with the water of wisdom, enclosed by the banks of strong moral rules, delightfully cool with contemplation, and filled with religious vows as with ruddy gees." In one of the *jātaka* tales the king of swans is Bodhisattva and Ānanda is the commander in chief. [94]

In one of the verses of *Pārāyana Sutta* Buddha compares himself with *haṁsa* and says 'As the bird, having left the bush takes up his abode in the fruitful forest, even so I, having left men of narrow views, have reached the great sea, like the *haṁsa.*

"Digo yathā kubbanakam pahāya

Bahupphalam kānanam āvaseyya

Evam paham appadasse pahāya

Mahodadhim hamso-riv' agghapatto" (*Pārāyana Sutta*)[95]

Aśoka incorporated the symbols, which were prevailing in those times such as *chakra*, *āsana*, figures of animals etc. and used them for the symbolic depiction of Buddha and important events of his life.

Aśoka's marvellous gift to Buddhist art is Sarnath pillar capital, which is a unique example of the symbolic Buddhist art. Firstly the *Chakra*, symbolizes the turning the Wheel of Law at *Mṛgadāva*, Four lion sitting back to back symbolizes the *Śākya siṁha* or Buddha spreading the truth in all four directions. Four animals carved on the abacus viz. bull, horse, elephant, lion symbolizes his date of birth, great renunciation and conception of Buddha. Lion symbolizes Buddha himself that he belonged to *Śākya* clan.

All art work was executed in hard grey sandstone quarried from Chunar. Big dimension stones were very finely chiselled and highly polished to a glossiness that has hardly a parallel in India at any other period of history and in the world except ancient Iran.[96]

All of them were reared up directly under the shadow of the royal throne of the Mauryas. Buddhist art took a new shape, discarded wood, and bamboo and perhaps brick, ivory, metal, clay and moved towards the new material i.e. stone as the material "par excellence" for monumental sculpture and to carving in live rock and that this new material is handed with such perfect ease and mastery as to suggest that the art of hand and large size stone cutting was as it were already done in practice. [97]

Not only Buddhist art but folk art also came to be fixed in permanent material and it was raised from the position of handicraft and primitive art to the dignity and status of civilised monumental art during this period and played a vital role and mark by their presence in next phase of Buddhist art i.e. Śuṅga art. Besides the animal sculptures described and discussed above, quite a considerable number of independent figure sculptures in the round, and of various sizes and proportions and a few fragments of relief have been ascribed to the Mauryan period.[98]

These detached statues are closely alike and may be taken as the earliest example of the indigenous art. As discussed earlier that the people were engaged in worshiping *nāga-nāgīs*, *apsarās asuras*, and tree worship. Many *Yakṣa* were also depicted in Bharhut stūpa railings. The importance of these statues is that, they became the model for the early Buddha/ Bodhisattva statute during early Kuṣāṇa period.

Summary

(1) Buddhism was one of the several rival faiths struggling for ascendancy till Aśoka adopted it. During the first two century after the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*, his creed could hardly be distinguished from other ascetic movement. It was during Aśokan period that it emerged as a distinct religion with great potentiality.

(2) The Aśokan pillars are full of the Buddha and are a study in symbolism, in the art of indirect representation in place of a direct portraiture. [99]

(3) Despite the fact that some of these animals find an honoured place in myths and legends of other religion, they were no less venerated by the Buddhist as is apparent from their mythology. It is indeed, striking to note that all of them, in one way or other were associated with Buddha.

(4) Life events of Buddha were translated into stone by Aśoka and his artistic originality was copied in the later sculptures of Bharhut, Sanchi and Amaravati.[100]

(5) *Yakṣa* cult of this period became very popular in Śuṅga period at Bharhut depiction of six *Yakṣa* and two *Yakṣī* while the inscriptions name at least fifteen of these deities: Dhatarṭho, Viruḍaka, Virupakho, Kupiro, Ajakālaka, Gaṁgito, Suchilomo, Supāvaso, Erapato, Nāgarājā, Chakavāko, Chanḍa *Yakṣī*, Yakhinī Sudasanā, Chulkokā Devatā, Mahākokā Devatā and Sirimā Devatā. In Kuṣāṇa period, these *Yakṣa* statute became the model for sculptor to carve the early Buddhist figures.

(6) Stone was substitute of wood in structures; imitation of wood carving into stone can be very well seen in the façade of the Lomas Ṛṣi cave. It may be regarded as true precursor of Śuṅga art. (Plate 2.20) Buddhist art assumed a form a grandeur not known before. In fact, Buddhist art evolution begins from this period to reach its new horizons in Śuṅga period.

(7) Buddhist art of this period expresses the power and majesty that was never seen in the past.

(8) Aśoka with his hard efforts gifted new idiom to Buddhism. He was able to reach his goal by spreading the Buddhism and Buddhist art in each and every corner of his country and even out side of it.

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   अपुरुषविद्याः स्युः इति अपरम्। अपितु यदद्दृश्यते अपुरूषविद्यंतत।

   यथा अग्निः। वायु। आदित्यः।चंद्रमा इति।
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    Tigmāyudhaṁ marutāmanīkaṁ kasta Indraparti vajraṁdadharsa /

    Anāyudhāso asurā devaśchakreṇa apa tapa ṛijīshīna. //
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CHAPTER 3

Buddhist Art during 2nd Century BCE to 1st Century BCE

(with special reference to Sanchi Stūpa No. II and Stūpa of Bharhut)

This chapter is sub-divided in to three parts for the convenience of study in understanding the evolution process of Buddhist art at two centres i.e. Sanchi stūpa No.II and Bharhut, in relation to the Aśokan art.

The part one deals with the similarities between the Aśokan and the Śuṅga art, part two deals with the art of Sanchi stūpa No. II and the third part is the study of Buddhist art remains of Bharhut stūpa.

PART ONE

Backdrop

Traits of Aśokan art incorporated by the sculptor of Śuṅga period

Early post - Mauryan art was born in Indian soil with deep and intimate ethnic and local roots. During this period sculptural art in the indigenous form became prolific in the medium of stone, carved on the railing pillars and magnificent gateways. This art is by and large narrative in character, aiming to describe in visual terms, various myths and traditions, facts and figures, certain signs and symbols and the celestial being. But there is striking similarity between the art of the Aśoka and the Buddhist art of second-first century BCE.

The descent of the Bodhisattva into the womb of his mother in form of an elephant is referred in texts like the *Dīgha Nikāya*.[1] Aśoka translated this tradition on stone. We find inscription along the figure of elephant at Kalsi. Elephant figure with the inscription *"Gajatame"* (Sanskrit > *Gajottamaḥ,* the best elephant) symbolises the birth of Buddha[2]. In the same manner as we found at Bharhut, where the queen Māyā dreaming a white elephant also symbolises the Bodhisattva coming in to her womb and the label attached to it says *'Bhagavato ūkramṁti'*.

In Aśokan art, we find animals carved in low relief on the abacus of pillars. During this period we also come across with very low relief carving on the railing pillar and gateways.

In Aśokan art, wheel, horse, bull, lion, elephant are the symbolic representation of incident related with life of Buddha. The Aśokan sculptor decorated the pillars by the devices each of which was to recall the Buddha. During the Śuṅga period, we also find wheel, horse, and elephant among the other motifs symbolising the life scenes of Buddha. The *Divyāvadāna*[3] preserves legends of Aśoka pilgrimages to the sacred Buddhist sites, where he offered worship and set up *chiñhas* or emblems.[4] These legends are corroborated by the mention of the visit to the *Saṁbodhi* in Bodhgaya, and erected a magnificent *bodhi* shrine and a *Bodhimaṇḍa*.[5]

Beautifully carved *Bodhimaṇḍa* found at Bodhgaya, were later on depicted under the *bodhi* tree, almost at every site of this period on the railings and gateways of stūpa. The raised altars of Bharhut and Sanchi in simple and severe designs developed into regular thrones and elaborately decorated chairs at Amaravati, with additional soft and round cushions. The carving on the facade of the Lomas Ṛṣi cave depicts elephants venerating stūpa and a *makara* from both sides, carved on low relief. Similar to this depiction one can see that in most of the gateways, coping and medallion; where elephants or series of elephants are venerating stūpa with lotus holding in their trunk. *Chaitya* shaped gateway like facade of the Lomas Ṛṣi cave, also found in the buildings and gateways carved on the railing of stūpa of

this period. This symbolic representation of the Buddha, which was initiated by Aśoka, continued with elaborations in the sculptural art and further developed into fine art in the period under consideration. **(Plate 3.1)**

Inscriptions of *dānam* engraved on the railing pillar and gateways seem to have been inspired by the Aśokan inscriptions for example, one of his rock edicts at Girnar. The text says, "Gifts are meritorious, but there is no such gift or favour as the gift of *dharma* or the favour related to *dharma*. Therefore, whether one is a person's friend, or well wisher, or relative, or companion, one should advise him on different occasion, "This ought to be done. This is meritorious; by this practice alone is it possible to attain heaven." And what is a greater achievement than this, viz. "the attainment of heaven".[6] Edict of Kalsi reads, "There is no such gift as the gift of *dharma*".

The early remains of Buddhist sculptural art at stūpa No. II Sanchi, stands first in stylistic consideration. Now, the new era of narrative Buddhist art started with the carving of railings at stūpa no II, Sanchi, executed in very low and flat relief, and appears to be line drawings, merely sketched without any differentiation of ground. All narratives are carved in monoscenic mode. Sculptors mainly emphasised on the carving of lotus flowers and auspicious symbols in different styles and forms. The period of these railing reliefs at Sanchi stūpa No.II, may be fixed some where in the last quarter of the 2nd century BCE (180 BCE) on the basis of their style and paleography.

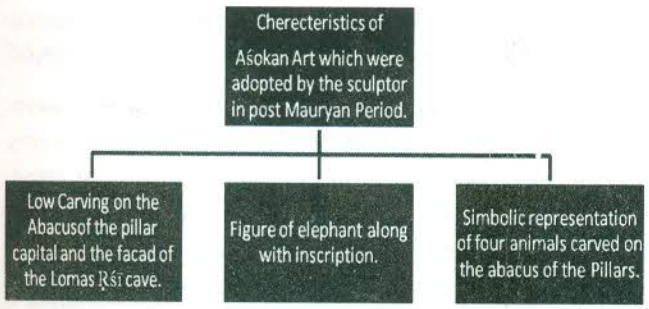

Diagram : I

This diagram clearly suggests that some of the traits in Buddhist art applied by the Aśoka were incorporated in the art of post Mauryan period, so much so the monumental art of this period were used by the sculptors of this period in symbolic form, for instance Aśokan pillar symbolises the *dharma chakra pravartan* & *Bodhimaṇḍa* at Bodhgaya symbolising the enlightenment at Bodhgaya.

Political background

As a result of Aśoka's wonderful zeal and activities, Buddhism was transformed as the leading religion of India. The story of Puṣyamitra's usurpation of the Mauryas throne is described in the *Purāṇas* which give account of the dynasties of Kaliṅga. "These are the ten Mauryas who will enjoy the earth for full 137 years. After them it will go to the Śuṅgas. Puṣyamitra, the commander in chief will uproot Brahadratha and will rule the kingdom as king for 36 years". After Mauryas, Puṣyamitra Śuṅga came over the throne of Magadha. According to the Buddhist text *Divyāvadāna,* Śuṅga rulers prosecuted the Buddhists and destroyed their monasteries and *chaityas*.[7]

The Buddhist legends relating to Puṣyamitra are given in the concluding portion of the *Divyāvadāna*,[8] here Puṣyamitra is represented as the last king of the Mauryan dynasty. It is said there in, that one Puṣyamitra on the advice of his non Buddhist priest destroyed the Buddhist monasteries and slaughtered the monks. On reaching Śākala, he issued this proclamation "who ever will present me the head of a *Śramaṇa* will be rewarded with 100 *dīnārs*[9] but ultimately Puṣyamitra failed in this attempt and was killed by a *yakṣa* named Kṛmisena who vowed to protect the religion of Buddha. This legend clearly indicates that Puṣyamitra was remembered by the Buddhist as a non Buddhist monarch whose dominion extended as far as Śākala (Sialkot) and who tried to rival Aśoka in power and fame.[10]

This could have been an exaggeration, but archaeological evidence reveals that Buddhist monuments in the Śuṅga domain were at this time in disrepair and being renovated,[11] not even that, Buddhist art activity took a great leap and flourished beyond the imagination and started a new era in Buddhist art. Infact, this period was the most important period in the entire history of the sculptural art when the creative genius of the sculptor of India freely carved traditional motifs, beliefs and symbols. The credit of this art revolution goes to the rich merchant, lay worshippers and general followers of Buddha. Now, the regional art centers began to flourish on the trade routes and in and around the trade centers.

NATURE OF ART

Aniconic art

It is a well known fact, that the Buddha was never represented in early Buddhist art in narrative reliefs depicting events of his previous life. The early Buddhist art of Bharhut, Sanchi, early phase at Amaravati and Bodhgaya was aniconic. (Many other sites of south India also have both aniconic and iconic depictions). In this phase of Buddhist art, Buddha was never represented in human form, but by means of symbols. His presence in a particular scene was indicated by way of substituting symbols. The conception was represented by the dream of Māyā of a divine crouched elephant entering her womb (scene is depicted at sites Andher, Bharhut and Sanchi stūpa No. I, Amin, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda); the nativity by a lotus flowers carrying by the elephant in his trunk (scene is depicted at site Sanchi stūpa No. II); the great departure by a riderless horse (scene is depicted at Sanchi stūpa No. II and I, Bharhut, Amaravati, Pitalkhora etc.); the attainment of enlightenment by an empty throne sometimes bearing his footprints under the Bodhi tree, *dharma chakra pravartna* by *chakra* and his *Mahāparinirvāṇa* by a stūpa. (scene is depicted at Sanchi stūpa No.I, II, III, etc.)

For the first time the theory of aniconism was given by the M.A. Foucher[12] in a short lecture on the Eastern gateway delivered at the Musée Guimet. He concluded in his lecture, that the tree represents the *Saṁbodhi*, the moment of supreme enlightenment at Bodhgaya, while the symbol of wheel stands for the first sermon in the deer park at Sarnath, and the stūpa represent the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* at Kuśīnagar.

According to Coomarswamy,[13] the reason for this, is the absence of the Buddha figure from the world of living men is a true artistic rendering of the masters guarded silence respecting after death state of those who have attained *nirvāṇa* and concluded that in omission of the figure of the Buddha, the early Buddhist art is truly Buddhist.

Y. Krishana[14] suggests that, the negation of Buddha's figure in early Buddhist art is due to Vedic tradition. According to him, "...The architects of Bharhut, Sanchi and early Amaravati did not want to have a radical break from the contemporary Vedic tradition of worship of the impersonal forces of nature which was not anthropomorphic in character. It was a compromise between the emerging *bhakti* cult and nature of worship, a desire to pay homage to and deify the *Mahāpuruṣa* Buddha without violating the contemporary ideas of worship of metaphysical forces.

Here, except Buddha, every one is carved, such as his mother, kings, queens, his followers, foreigners and even his lay worshippers except monks. It is believed that, the Theravādins, the earlier conservative sect eschewed all representation of the Buddha as tending to deify him, who, according to that sect was essentially a human being like any other. For them the Buddha had ceased to exist finally on attaining *nirvāṇa*; he was no longer liable to rebirth and death and had attained the state of utter formlessness. As such it is inferred that they held it to be erroneous to depict him in a form that had been dissolved completely. Coomaraswamy[15] also attests the above views.

It is proved here that canonical prohibition restricted sculptor to make the sculpture or image of Buddha. But sculptors put their entire efforts to indicate the presence of Buddha with the suitable symbols.

People's art

Early Buddhist art was considerably a social phenomenon. It was a product of the collective and integrated activity of the people to popularize and promote the faith, which carried message of the Buddhist faith to the people by the people.[16]

The Śuṅga style of art, unlike the Mauryans, was not mainly the result of a single centralised patronage. Though a few local kings have also contributed for this purpose, it was like a donation by any other rich person for sake of acquiring virtuous merit. Every strata of society gave their contribution, whether they were a lay followers, ladies or gents, poor or rich, kings or people, monks or nuns etc. This is evident from the epigraphical record engraved on the railing from Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya and other places. Even people from the distant places used to visit and donate for religious places ie. stūpa, same can also be seen in the inscriptions found on the railings of stūpa.

Impact of trade and guilds

Creation of art is not an isolated event, but it is interconnected with economical, social, political and religious conditions of that period under consideration. Economical factor serves as parallel line for art activity;

when the graph of economical progress runs higher, the line of art activity with quality also increases. Thus in a deeper analysis evolution of art is closely connected with changing economic patterns. Western scholars draw a parallel between evolution of art and evolution of society. In this context they have propounded a theory of social determinism according to which socio-economic factors were recognised as conditioning factors for art, architecture, society and culture.[17]

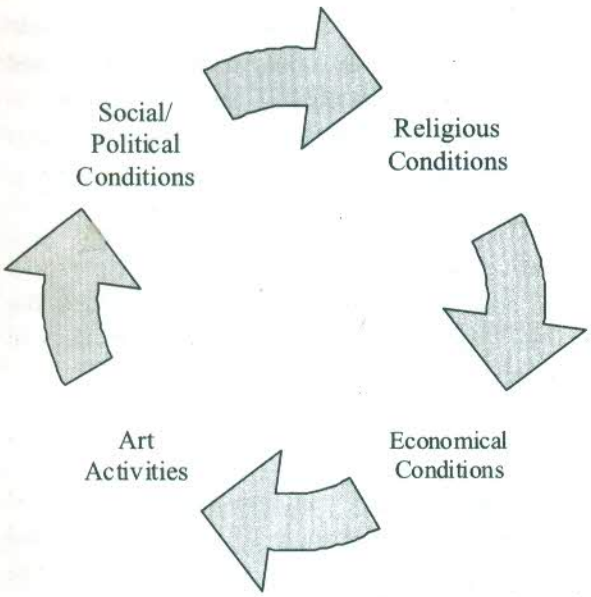

Diagram II : Art activity affected by the other related factors

A change in nature of economy brings a change in the patron class, in socio-religious institutions and ideologies, which in turn create new requirement and fresh opportunities for the emergence of new forms and content in art.[18]

The art of this period is marked with its association of Buddhist religion. The facades of the *chaityas*, and the railings and the gateways of the stūpa were parts of the monumental architecture which provided the artists with opportunities to show their skills. In south India, the stūpa of this period, drums and hemispherical domes are also richly carved. This period is marked by a tremendous growth in external as well as internal trade. [19] In this period, India became a part and parcel of the great Asian complex of international land trade and the maritime trade. India had maritime trade relation with Rome and Egypt etc.

As a result, economic and social conditions were changed. Merchants and traders were the most benefited community from the external and internal trade. They became the most affluent class of society; most of the donatives records of this period speak of merchants like *sārthavāhas, śreṣṭhīṣ,* it apparent from donatives records from the sites that they were being used by merchants as halting stations on their trade journeys. The southern pillar of the eastern gateway and north pillars of the western gateway at Sanchi were the gifts of Nagapiya, a banker *"dhanamaha"*. A perusal of gifts to Buddhist monks and institutions mentioned in Lòders list leaves the impression that in Bharhut and Sanchi most of gifts were made by artisans and a class of merchants called *'gaṅdhikās'*.[20]

Most of the important Buddhist monuments have been found in and within the vicinity of great trading centres and along the trade routes for example, stūpas of Sanchi and Bharhut were near Vidisha, an important stations on the way of Ujjain-Pāṭalīputra highway.

Early Buddhist art work stimulated with the expansion of trade and commerce. As R.S. Sharma pointed out that the first lay converters of Buddhism came from the trading class.[21] In the art of Amaravati[22] we find a depiction along with a inscription says, *"Dhaṁñekaḍa Vaṁda nāma goṭi"*. Buddhism received generosity and patronage from guilds, merchants and wealthy trading class and local devotees. At the bottom of the earliest art work at Amaravati a stele is depicting a railing, three arched shaped structure pillars and stairs to a big entrance, on the right side corner is a depiction of a double story building encircled with railings. On the top right side is a water body with stream flowing in two directions. A woman is shown carrying a pitcher coming from the river. There is an inscription written vertically to the left of the top most pavilions. "*Dhaṁñekaḍa Vaṁda nāma goṭi*" i.e. the *goṣthī* called *Vaṁda* at Dhānayakataka". This face is no doubt represents the scene at Dhānyakaṭaka (Amaravati). The river is Krishna on the right bank of the city. The word *goṭi* may be represented an association or committee of traders, which probably had played an important role in construction of stūpa. The structures had shown here depicts the establishment of this association. Many art centers were developed along the trade routes. **(Plate 3.2)**

Low relief and two dimensional art

Largely influenced by the wooden art tradition, the stone sculptures of this period are in the initial stage as

known for their frontality, low carving, stiffness and crude treatment. Though they have the quality to express them self to the viewer. One can recognise the theme; matter or massages depicted on railing pillars.

Pan Indian art: Centres in all parts of country

The Śuṅga period ushered a new age in the domain of art and architecture. The artistic movement in the early classical phase spread throughout the country, and had prolific centers of activity both in the north and in the south. The down-fall of Mauryan empire gave birth to many regional states that resulted as further growth of trade, prosperity, literacy (as evident from terracotta plaque from Śugh, Haryana; showing a child learning Brāhmī alphabet),[23] mobility of traders, pilgrims, monks and artists including sculptor. They also patronised the regional art centers. This was predominantly Buddhist in form and nature. The sculptor mainly worked on the basis of traditional concepts and chiseled in stone; themes, religious thinking, folklores, and motifs already in vogue for several centuries, probably carved on wooden material.

At Katar[24] (Musanagar) near Allahabad, 160 k.m. from Bharhut, during excavations, the art remains of a stūpa were found resembling with the stūpa of Bharhut. At Haryana (Amin, Hathin),[25] Rajasthan (Lalsot),[26] Maharastra (Pauni,[27] Karle, Bhaja, Bedasa, Pitalkhora), Madhya Pradesh (Andher, Sanchi, Bharhut, Vidisha, Deokuthar[28]), Orissa (Bhubaneswar, Badagada), Uttar Pradesh (Kaushambi[29], Mathura, Sarnath, Katar), Bihar (Kumbrahar,[30] Bodhgaya), and in south India (Amaravati, Sannati, Nagarjunikonda, Goli, etc.) remains of post Mauryan Buddhist art were met with. **(Plate 3.3)**

Remains of stūpa from Katar have a great similarity with the stūpa at Bharhut. Apart from the stūpa and *triratna* shrine which were carved in square blocks; gateways, pillars, medallions disclose a close connection with these two sites. Hand prints on the base of stūpa, as a tradition of folk/primitive culture can be noticed only at Bharhut, Katar and Mathura. Stūpa remains from Deokuthar have also a stone railing carved with lotus on them. Sculptural remains of stūpa at Pauni are also remarkable for there low carved *Yakṣa* and *Yakṣī*, symbolic depiction of *saṁbodhi, dharma chakra pravartana*, and *Mahāprinirvāṇa* and *nāga* Muchalinda episode along with the label. **(Plate 3.6)**

Unity among diversity : Regional variation

The reliefs from early Buddhist sites, though are located at far away places from each other, but have close affinity in art style, techniques, motifs, subjects, and architecture and art expressions. On the other hand, one can observe regional variation in every site, for example at Sanchi stūpa No. II, most of the human figures were carved, standing on a pedestal. **(Plate 3.4)**

In Bharhut one can notice hand impression depicted on the base part of stūpa, throne or on sacred place. **(Plate 3.5)** Subject wise, also one site differs from the other. Only at Bodhgaya one can observe the depiction of Sun God and zodiac signs. At Bhaja there is a depiction of Sun God on his chariot and Indra riding on Airāvata. At Bharhut lots of *Jātakas* are carved on coping as well as on railings. But, at Sanchi and Bodhgaya very few *Jātakas* were carved.

The unique depiction with inscription, of Buddha's life prior to his *nirvāṇa* (of last three months) at Amaravati is noteworthy. At Sanchi stūpa No.I, ground railings, cross bars and copings are plain, At Sanchi stūpa No. II only railings are carved, where as coping and cross bars are left plain, At Bharhut coping, cross bars, railing are profusely carved. At Bodhgaya railing, pillars, cross bars are carved, but it is not intricately carved. Railing at Pāṭlīputra are carved only on one side, whereas, the other side is left plain.

Depiction of popular deities [*(a) Folk deities; (b) Hindu deities; (c) Semi divine deities*]

People from time immemorial have been worshipping the demigods, nature and other semi-divine beings, because of fear and their destructive powers. They are not just folk deities but they are also mentioned in *Ṛgveda*,[31] *Mahābhārat*,[32] *Rāmāyaṇa*[33] Buddhist canonicals and in other literatures. These Gods includes *sadhyās, piṭras, apsarās*,[34] *gandharvās*,[35] *yakṣas, rākṣas*[36], *kinnar* [37] *piśācās, guhyakās* and *vaimāṇikas*.[38] The worship of *yakṣas* and *nāgas*[39] remained in popularity for a considerable period of time.

The carvings of demigods on the Bharhut gateway and on the railings of Sanchi along with the findings of numerous statues bearing inscriptions testify to the popularity of this minor religious cult. The worship of the *yakṣas* became associated with images, temples, rituals etc. Later on they were worshiped together with the *nāgas* and

goddesses. Finally such practice became the base of the *bhakti* cult.

In the Śuṇga art the *yakṣa* deity reigns supreme, since the time of the formation of Brahmanical gods and goddesses and also the Buddha or *Tīrthaṅkara* images which were not yet crystallised. From the point of view of art, these statues appears to be grand ancestors of the subsequent Bodhisattva, Buddha, *Tīthaṅkara* and Viṣṇu images; not only in size and plastic effect but, the various elements of drapery and ornamentation were adopted by later artists called upon to evolve an iconographic formula for new divine figures.[40]

The tradition of carving huge sculptures of *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* was prior to the Mauryan period. The period of the Vedas witnessed startling developments pertaining to *yakṣas*. It was a cult of common folk, these common folk worshipped *yakṣas* in the special temple dedicated to him and known as *yakṣas sadana*.[41]

We find many references to the *Chātummahārājika* gods in Buddhist literature presiding over the four directions of space thus it is quite natural that the builders of the earliest Buddhist stūpa have given the most conspicuous look to these four deities on the four gateways.[42]

In Bharhut stūpa figure of two *yakṣas* are located in cardinal directions i.e. Kubera on the north (*Kupiro yakho*) and Virūḍhaka on the south. On the northern gateway the figure of *Ajakālaka yakṣa* and Chandra *yakṣī* were carved on the pillar associated with that of Kubera. On the eastern gateway the figure of Sudarśanā *Yakṣī* and in the western gateways the figures on the pillar in addition to Virūḍhaka *Yakṣa* the figure of Gaṅgita *yakṣa* and Chakravāka *Nāgarāja* were also carved. On the western gateway the figures of Suchiloma *yakṣa* and Sirimā devatā are carved on one pillar and on a second pillar the figure of Supāvasa *Yakṣa* is carved. On one of the pillar Sudarśanā *yakṣī* are majestically carved. (Plate 3.7)

The *devatā* figures sculpted on the pillars are all female divinities viz. Sirimā *Devatā*, Chulakokā Devatā and Mahākokā Devatā. Sirimā Devatā is the same as Śrī-Lakṣmī, the ancient goddess of fertility and wealth as referred in *Śrī-Sūkta*, *Ṛgveda*.

The *nāgas* were also considered as a guardian deity. On a pillar of Bharhut at in the central medallion five hooded Muchlinda *Nāgarāja*, sheltering the throne and the footprints of the Buddha. Muchlinda is said to have protected the Buddha during a storm. The *nāga* king Chakravāka is carved on the corner pillar of the southern gateway. *Apsarās* are also considered as semi divine beings. At Bharhut four of them are depicted along with the labels of their names as Alambuśā, Miśrakeśī[43] Sudarśanā and Subhadrā.[44]

At Bharhut the female figures are carved on high relief. They are depicted with extraordinary beauty and charm, having their slim body, extra ordinary bejewelled from head to toe, with beauty marks on the head and cheeks, wearing diaphones cloths, with elaborate headgear and a very elegant posture, standing on *nara*, *yakṣa* or *paśuvāhana*.

Hindu deities like Gaja Lakṣmī, Indra, and Sūrya are also depicted on the railing of Bharhut, Sanchi, and Bodhgaya etc. In the earliest Buddhist Art Brahmanical deities like Brahmā and Indra (Śakra) were depicted as occupying subordinate position to Buddha. In the birth scene of Buddha, Śakra and Brahmā are represented as paying homage to the birth of the Buddha. On Bodhgaya railing belonging to the Śuṅga period Śakra and Brahmā are represented in subordinate positions. The Buddhist literature is full of such reference which shows superiority of the Buddha over the Brahmanical deities.[45]

But, it is not in the case of Gaja Lakṣmī. It seems that she was very popular deity among all the religious faith and sects. The depiction of Gaja Lakṣmī is found from almost every site either in standing or in sitting posture. She is among the most popular deities as it can be seen in several depictions on the stūpa of Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya etc. (Plate 3.8) Early reference of Lakṣmī is found in the Vedic literature in *Śrī sūkta*. *Saubhāgya Lakṣmī Upaniṣad* reffers the description of Gaja Lakṣmī. The form of Gaja Lakṣmī is also mentioned in this text.[46]

Vālmīki, while describing the image of Gaja Lakṣmī carved on the door-lintels of Rāvaṇa's *Puṣpaka*, palace in Laṅkā, says that in a lotus pool could be seen (artificial) elephants with trunks and covered with filaments (of Lotus) engaged in offerings worship to the Goddess Lakṣmī with lotus petals held in their trunks, and an image of Lakṣmī too had been fashioned with graceful hands carrying a lotus in her hand. [47]

नियुज्यमानाश्च गजाः सुहस्ताः सकेसराश्चोत्पल पत्रहस्ताः।
बभूव देवी च कृता सुहस्ता लक्ष्मीस्तथा पद्मिनि पद्महस्ता॥

The image of Gaja Lakṣmī should be shown sitting on lotus; her eye should be like *padama-patra*, holding lotus in her hand, grabbed in white costume, she should be anointed by the elephants. In the *Saubhāgya Lakṣmī Upaniṣad;* Gaja Lakṣmī is being prayed for bestowing *bhakti, mukti, vibhuti, ṛddhi samriddhi, puṣṭi*, and *dharma* etc.[48] The sculptor depicted Gaja Lakṣmī according to iconography given in this text. The *Brahmajāla Sutta* prohibits the worship of the god/goddess, inspite of, that it was the favourite goddess to be carved on the railings or gateways of Buddhist stūpa.

The art of this phase can be divided in two phases

Evolution of this art can broadly be divided into two parts or phases, from the point of view of form and style as well as from that social tastes and attitudes as reflected in these art specimens.

(a) *Early phase: Sanchi stūpa No. II, first phase of Amaravati, Kauśāmbī etc.*

In the early phase of aniconic art, very limited life events of Buddha were depicted and they were almost all monoscenic narratives. Very few *Jātakas* were depicted i.e., the *Aśvamukhī* (*'Aśvamukhī'* also mentioned in *Rāmāyaṇa*)[49] *Jātaka* is popularly found depicted in early Buddhist sites. Carving during this early phase is crude primitive and in very low relief.

(b) *Mature phase: Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Sanchi stūpa No.III and I & Pauni, etc.*

In this phase lots of *Jātaka* stories were carved on railings, copings and gateways. Besides, the four main life scenes of Buddha, other scenes for example; Buddha's descendent from *Trayastriṁśa* heaven, Ajātśatru visiting Buddha, Indra visiting Buddha etc. are also carved. Carvings of the second phase are fine, elaborately ornamented and are in high relief. Sculptors were trying to give three dimensional effects to sculptures.

Jātaka as a popular subject for carving on the railing or coping of the stūpa

The Pali *Jātakas* are the 10th book of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*.[50] The *Jātaka* stories depicts the long series of encounters in life faced by the Buddha in his previous lives. At the end of every story there is a brief summary in which the Buddha is identified as the different person in the story.

The *Jātaka* tales describing the previous lives of Buddha was a popular subject to be carved on the stūpa. Though, in the early phase there were restricted *Jātaka* stories, but later onwards many popular *Jātakas* occupied the place on stūpa railings and *toraṇas*. Each story ends with a moral, illustrating the Buddhist ideal of *dharma* and self-sacrifice in diverse forms.

These stories were narrated by Buddha himself during the course of his sermons, that by constant practice of virtuous deeds or *Pāramitā* (the highest virtue) one reaches the status of the "Enlightened One". In these tales, the pre-enlightened Buddha was designated as the "Bodhisattva" - a lay creature on the path of enlightenment, in the form of a human being, animal, birds, fish, etc. Bodhisattva in various forms is carved on the stūpa railings without hesitation.

The evidence preserved in early Buddhist art of Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya, Amaravati reliefs and other sites shows their narrative forms were more or less standardized by 2nd century BCE. The *Jātaka* stories in Bharhut reliefs bear inscribed captions probably with a view to educate those Buddhist worshippers who were visiting the sacred sites, urging them to follow the righteous path. The *Jātakas* are numerous, nearly 500 or so referring to significant events relating to the lives of the Bodhisattvas constructively preparing for a higher goal leading to perfection of knowledge.

Sculptor carved the *Jātaka* story in various forms; carvings of some *Jātakas* are depicted only one scene, Some *Jātakas* are depicted in various episodes, some are depicted in single medallion but depicted many episodes of story.

Auspicious symbols

Lotus, auspicious symbols like swastika, *triratna*, (Plate 3.9) *chakra*, tree in railing, (Plate 3.10) *nandi pada, pūrṇa ghaṭa* (Plate 3.11) *śrīvatsa* (Plate 3.12) and *padma* (Plate 3.13) are prolifically carved on the stūpa railing.

Origin of some of the motif may be assigned to the Harappan times. *Triratna* motifs carved on the stūpa No. II at Sanchi has a close affinity with Harappan ivory seal depicting pīpal tree with two horned mythical creatures attached to the stem and shaping as *triratna*.[51]

The Harappans in 3,000 B.C. had already made use of symbols like swastika. **(Plate 3.14)** This shows the continuity of these symbols from time immemorial till date, not only in Buddhism, but these symbols were considered sacred in all sects of society.

Remains of a stūpa from Katar shows a relief in which a swastika is carved on the base part of stūpa. One can remember that the same type of swastika motif carved on the gold leaf had been unearthed at the base part of the stūpa of Piprahawa during the excavation. **(Plate 3.15)**

In Buddhist texts *śrīvatsa* has been referred to among all other auspicious symbols like swastika, *nandyāvarta, chakra, padma* **(Plate 3.15)** *triratna.* In the *Lalitavistara* prince Siddharth's hair has been styled as *śrīvatsa.*[52]

The same source narrates the story of Sujātā, cooking *pāyasa* where many auspicious symbols including *śrīvatsa* formed alternately in the boiling milk.

(tasmin khalvati kṣīre śrīvatsa, swastika, nandyāvarta, padama Vardhamāna ādīni maṅgalyāni sandṛśyate soma.)[53]

Originally, the *chakra* symbols are certainly not ascribable to Buddhism. It also represents the time, motion, progress, Sun etc., but later on it was utilised by the Buddhist for their own purpose.

The *Pūrṇa Kumbha* or the full vase is one of the most beautiful decorative symbols of early Indian art. It is also known as *pūrṇa ghaṭa, maṅgala kalaśa, maṅgala ghaṭa, bhadra ghaṭa* etc.[54] It is an emblem of fullness and prosperity of life endowed with all its gifts, moral material and spiritual. The representation of this delightful symbol occurs in art and sculpture in continuation from the Śuṅga to the medieval period.

This symbol is also depicted in Bharhut, Sanchi, Amaravati and Bodhgaya. *Ṛgveda* quotes it as "overflowing is the vase of the *yajamāna* glory to him, as a bounteous pourer have I filled up the cup for you all to drink." [55]

Part Two

Sculptural art of Śuṅga period

Being tradition the ancient Indian buildings were enclosed with a wooden fence or balustrade, the Buddhists also adopted it and surrounded their stūpa with *vedikā.* Hardly, any feature of Buddhist art or architecture is more characteristic than the railing. It remained the emblem of protection dating back the Vedic times or even earlier [56] and it became a characteristic feature of the stūpa. Later they started transforming it in stone but unconsciously this transformed all features, including of wooden railing.

The railings or *Prākār* (in Pali-*Parikkhepa*) were constructed around the stūpa, *Bodhi* tree and around the pillar as may be seen at for example Sanchi stūpa No. II, Bharhut, Amaravati, Bodhgaya railing; lion pillar of Besenagar or Vidisha. At Vidisha a railing around the lion capital was explored by Sir A. Cunningham. On this stone railing the carving are of full blown lotus flowers in the middle and on upper medallion. [57]

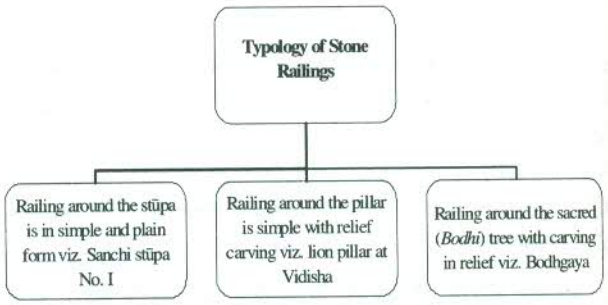

Diagram : III

The development of railing in respect of sculptural art may be divided in to four stages viz.

Stage 1. Plain railings (viz. Sanchi stūpa No. I)

Stage 2. Railing carved with floral motifs, animal motifs, and honeysuckle motifs

(Initial stages viz. Railing around the lion pillar at Vidisha, middle railing of Sanchi stūpa No. I)

Stage 3. Railing carved with few *Jātaka* scenes, sacred flora and fauna. (stūpa No. II)

Stage 4. Railing carved with number of *Jātaka* scenes, historical scenes, animal motif, floral motif, mythical animal motif, folk and popular deities etc. (Developed stages i.e. Bharhut stūpa railings)

History of plain stone railing from Aśokan period

Sanchi stūpa No.I has plain railing. **(Plate 3.16)** It is well known that this stūpa was erected in Aśokan period

and the plain railing suggests the tradition of stone railing erected around the pillars of Aśokan period.

Aśoka erected a stone railing around the pillar at Lumbini. (Plate 3.17) Though no remains of railing were left but, the inscription suggest that a stone railing was once there all around the pillar. The inscription reads:

Devānampiyana Piyadasina Lājina visativasā bhisitena atana āgācha mahiyite hida Buddha jāte Sakyamuniti silāvigadabhichā kālāpite silāthabe cha usapāpite hida Bhagavaṁ jāte ti Luṁmini gāme ubalike kaṭe aṭhabhāgiye cha..

It means; "twenty years after his coronation, king Priyadarśī, beloved of the Gods, visited this spot in person and offered worship at this place, because the Buddha, the sage of Śākyas was born here. He caused to build a stone wall around the place and also erected this stone pillars to commemorate his visit. Because the lord Buddha was born here, he made the village of Lumbini free from land revenue and subject to pay only one-eighth of the produce as tax instead of the usual rate".[58]

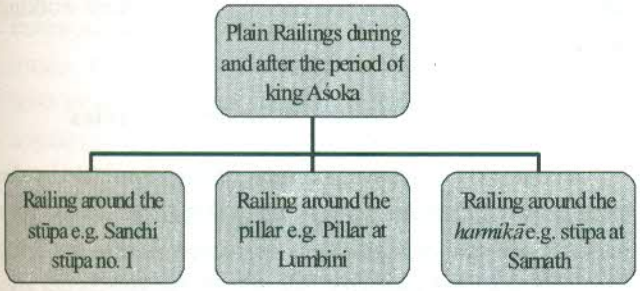

Diagram - IV

Stage 1 : Plain railing

A monolithic plain stone railing of Aśokan period was found around the *harmikā* at the top of the Dharmarājika stūpa at Sarnath (Plate 3.18) with the provision of four holes at the four corners, probably installing the base for the wooden altar and in the middle for *chhatra.* (Plate 3.19)

Stage 2 : Initial Stage

Though the ground railing of stūpa No. I of Sanchi is plain but in middle railing some carvings of animal mostly of elephant, flower design, fabulous animal and honeysuckle (*triratna* type) motifs can be seen. (Plate 3.20) It may be the first step towards carving of stone railings.

Stage 3 : Developing Stage

Sanchi stūpa No. II :

In the third stage, the sculptor was trying to carve ground railing of stūpa mainly with fabulous animal, animals, lotus flowers, very few *Jātaka* stories, Buddhist symbols and some of social scenes.

The Sanchi stūpa No. II is 50 feet in diameter and 29 feet in height. It is located on a terrace half-way up the western slope of the Sanchi hill (ancient name Kakanava). Stūpa is an earthen mound and incased with bricks as a core later on veneered with partly dressed stone. It has a ground railing in swastika pattern with four entrances in cardinal directions. The lower and upper ambulatory, the upper and the small *harmikā* atop also made of stone. Earlier the relic chamber of stūpa II yielded an inscribed sandstone box containing four steatite relic caskets. Each of these reliquaries is inscribed with the names of the Buddhists saints, whose relics were kept within the casket.

The ground railing is about 7.3/4 feet high, consisted of 88 pillars in four quadrants, connected by three sets of crossbars and capped with coping. Pillars are carved on both outer and inner side with half medallion on upper and lower side of pillar and full medallion in the middle, while coping and cross bars were left uncarved. These medallions are carved with vast group of motifs including the popular lotus and other Buddhist and related subjects.

A new era of narrative Buddhist art began with the construction of railing of the stūpa No. II of Sanchi. It was just the beginning of narrative art. Executed in very low and flat relief the panels look almost like linear patterns.

Sculptor of Sanchi stūpa No. II initially would have faced two major problems; The first problem was, as to how to carve in a new medium, i.e. stone and what kind of themes could be depicted on the stone railing of stūpa. The technical difficulty faced by the sculptor at Sanchi stūpa No. II was carving on stone, being relatively new material for the craftsmen of the native. In wood and ivory carving, they were expert enough for which they were practicing from time immemorial. What they had to do was to make an attempt to continue to best of their own traditional methods; to carve the stone as they were accustomed to carve wood and ivory and other soft mediums. The second problem arises before the sculptors were to narrate the

themes on it to decorate the stone railing. They preferred the subject related to, 1. Buddhist themes. 2. Auspicious symbols adopted by Buddhist pantheon or which were considered as sacred by the cotemporary society. 3. Prevailing social scenes. 4. Decorative motifs. 5. Flora, fauna and geometrical designs. 6. Popular historical scenes. 7. Subject related to the mundane world, and fabulous creatures. The lack of uniformity in design of carving and in the quality of its workmanship also shows its premature form of art.[59]

The stūpa No. II was made known to scholars by Sir Alexander Cunningham as early as in 1854 but, no art historian except John Marshall and Foucher gave due importance to this great monument of art. In this respect the name of E.B. Havel, Percy Brown, Jeannine Auboyer, Madeleine Hallade can also be added.[60] Though, Nihar Ranjan Ray and V. S. Agrawala have also dedicated a few lines to the importance of this monument.

For the first time in the year 1927, A. K. Coomaraswamy raised the question of its place in the development of Indian Buddhist art. As per his views the relief of the railing of Sanchi stūpa No. II are very much identical in style as can be seen at of Bharhut stūpa remains; this, however only applies restricted to a few part, where as in the earlier part of art, in spite of, the extraordinary sense of decorative design, the treatment of the human figure is still in a primitive form. In some panels the art seems to be in its primitive stage/formative stage which is less advanced than preceding century.[61]

According to Marshall "the reliefs on this stūpa has a unique value and make it an outstanding landmark in the history of Indian art, no less then of Buddhism. The subject portrayed is similar to those on the gateways of the Stūpa No. I. Among them, the four chief events of Buddha's life are conspicuous, his birth, enlightenment, first sermon and *nirvāṇa;* each one are represented by their own peculiar symbols i.e. The lotus, the pīpal tree, the wheel, the stūpa. In addition to this there are also figures of *yakṣas* and *yakṣī*, many hooded *nāga*, and a host of real and fabulous animals, sometime with riders, elephants, bulls, horses, deer, winged lion, *makaras* and griffin.....horse headed and fishtailed men or centaurs with women on their backs-forms which seem to have their origin some where in west Asia rather then in India".

Among the floral motifs the popular one is the lotus symbol which depicts the birth and life, sometimes richly elaborated devices; among birds the peacock, the goose and the *sāras* are seen very prominent besides characteristic Buddhist emblems, *triratna*, *nandipada* and *srīvatsa* and pillars crowned by lions, or elephants. Their style is rough indigenous in character of ancient Indian art, the keynote of which is a strikingly crude treatment of the living figures, combined with less appealing decorative design. The relief is the earliest important examples of indigenous style of art work in stone; it contributed a land mark in the evolution of Indian art".[62]

The majority of pillars on the Sanchi stūpa No.II railings are not elaborately carved/decorated. The entrance pillars are profusely carved, with time and space intrusions. Both the interior and exterior surfaces of the railing pillars are carved with low relief and medallions to be viewed by the worshiper while performing the circumambulatory rites. Here, the carving does not seem to form a coherent pattern. The railings are imitation in stone of wooden prototype architecture, and it is likely that the forms and decorations had a long tradition in wood carving prior to their working on stone.

Carving of lotus flower in different styles

About 90% of carvings on the railing dominate by the lotus flower. Different types of lotus flower are carved very majestically and beautifully. The reason is that the lotus flower is always considered not only in Buddhism but also in Brahmanism and Jainism, as a sacred and auspicious floral symbol. In *Saṁyutta Nikāya* of the Pali canon Buddha stated that, "Just as, brethren a dark blue lotus or a white lotus, born in the water, come to full growth in the water, rises to the surface and stands unspotted by the water, even so, brethren, the *Tathāgata* having been born in the world having come to full growth in the world, passing beyond the world, abides unspotted by the world".[63]

Some times lotus is considered as a symbol of Buddha and it represents the Buddha many times. The text *Lalitavistara*[64] speaks of the Buddha's descent to earth from the *Tuṣita* heavens. It mentions that, "The Bodhisattva arises like a lotus from the boundless lake of many qualities." Further it also mentions that lotuses sprang up wherever the new born infant Buddha rested his feet. In a description

in *Buddha-Charita* of Aśvaghoṣa, it is mentions that, "Then he (Buddha) with his eyes long and like a full blown lotus, looking back on the city, uttered a sound like a lion, till I have seen the further shore of birth and death I will never again enter the city called after Kapila." [65]

Important carving of the life scene of Buddha

Conception or Descent

The Buddha enters into the womb of Māyā in the form of a great elephant having six tusks, a lotus in his trunk. Elsewhere, the crouched elephant, with garland on its head, floats on clouds where he walks carrying lotus stalks. In Sanchi stūpa No.II, numerous elephant are carved carrying lotus or lotus bunch in its trunk. At least two depictions show couchant elephant carrying lotuses in its trunk. Though Māyā Devī is not shown here, but the carving of elephants with lotus or lotus bunch and crouched elephant with ornamented headgear clearly suggested that the depiction indicate the conception of Buddha in his mother's womb. Portrayals of solitary elephants holding lotus stalks in their trunks, can also be identified as Siddhartha, since some texts describe him as carrying a lotus in his trunk as he appeared to Māyā Devī.[66] **(Plate 3.21)**

Scene of great departure

Here, for the first time life scenes of Buddha were depicted though few in number. In one medallion a scene of great departure is beautifully depicted. A horse with empty seat is seen standing; Chandaka is standing holding a *chhatra* with garlands. A *kamandalu* between the legs of horse is placed, while a flying deity with a garland hovers above.

It is the earliest depiction of 'Departure Scene' to be carved on the railing of any stūpa. At this point of view, this scene is very important. More over the scene is not in many episodes unlike as it is seen at Bharhut. It seems to be in a monoscenic mode of presentation of incident of Great Departure. **(Plate 3.22)**

Enlightenment *(Saṁbodhi)*

The *bodhi* tree is represented under a *chhatra* and two garlands on either sides of the tree, associative with two celestial deities hovering and garlanding the tree. *Bodhi* Tree here is shown within railing. Two *yakṣas* holding *āsana* with their upraised hands is shown under the tree. **(Plate 3.23)**

Dharmachakra Pravartana or *Chakra* worship

The depiction of the Aśokan pillars at the entrance on the railing pillars with the capitals showing lions, elephants and the composition of elephants and lions sitting back to back in four cardinal directions. At the north gate on the inner face of the railing pillars the carving is supported with a large *chakra* having16 spokes with a round shaft, above all enclosed within a sacred railing. Near one of the pillars two devotees are also seen in praying *mudrā*. The *chakras* are decorated with garlands, which symbolises the first sermon at Sarnath etc. **(Plate 3.24a, b & c)** Here, it may be mentioned that the various types of Aśokan piilars as narrated on the pillar railing of the entrance gates at Sanchi stūpa No. II records the existing pillars of those time, in form of a history, the notable aspects of these pillar carvings is that (1) the four lions sitting back to back with a *chakra* at the top denotes the Sarnath pillar (2)where as the single elephant in sitting posture represents Sankisa and Bodhgaya (?) (3) A unique depiction of four elephants sitting back to back needs special attention, so far such pillar has not yet been discovered therefore, it is likely that this pillar would have also been made and erected some where? The area/site is yet to be explored or discovered.

Jātaka story

Aśvamukhī Jātaka or *Pādkusalamānava Jātaka*, in which Bodhisattva was born as son to a horse headed *yakṣī* and a brāhmaṇa. [67]

This *Jātaka* story is depicted in the monuments of Sanchi stūpa II, III, Bodhgaya, and Pāṭalīputra railings. At Sanchi, it appears on a central medallion of the pillar of ground railing of Stūpa II, and on the lowest architrave of the *toraṇa* of the Stūpa III.

The story runs as follows: Ones upon a time, in the reign of Brahmadatta, king of Banaras, his queen-consort, after falling into sin, was questioned by the king. Taking an oath she said, "if I have sinned against you, I shall become a horse faced *yakṣī*. So after death she became a horse faced *yakṣī*, dwelt in a rock-cave and used to catch

and devour the men. After serving *Vessavana* for three years she got permission to eat people in a space of thirty leagues long by five leagues broad.

One day she caught a handsome young brāhmaṇa and in the influence of passion she conceived love for him, and instead of devouring him she made him her husband. After some time she gave birth to a child, who was a Bodhisattva. Later on Bodhisattva freed him self and his father from the clutches of *yakṣī* and said to her mother "Mother, we are men; you are a *yakṣī* we cannot, always abide with you and we will not return. Miserable *yakṣī* said to her child, "I am skilled in the lore of a wishing jewel; by its power, one can follow after the lapse of twelve years in the steps of those that have gone away. This will prove a livelihood to you. Take, my child, this invaluable charm." The *yakṣī* then and there died out of remorse. The Bodhisattva and brāhmaṇa cremated her and offerings by various coloured flowers, weeping and lamenting and than they both returned to Banaras.

On one of the railing of Bodhgaya, horse headed *yakṣī* holding the hand of brāhmaṇa, looking towards him, and dragging him to the forest. The background shows a tree and stone paved surface. In Sanchi stūpa No.II *yakṣī* and brāhmaṇa are depicted seated on a rock and living amicably. In the railing of Sanchi stūpa No.II she is shown holding mangoes and carrying her son on her waist while returning to the cave.

In the railing of Pāṭalīputra she is shown with brāhmaṇa and her son Bodhisattva. The sculpture at Pāṭalīputra is crude and is fading in its depiction. Where as, in Sanchi stūpa No.II the figure is proportionate; carved with every necessary details in a round and small medallion. In Sanchi stūpa III the sculpture is not clear but one can make out forest and cave area, and the seated *yakṣī* with brāhmaṇa on a rock. **(Plate 3.25)** The depiction here is some what clumsy. The depiction in Bodhgaya is the best representation of this *Jātaka.* The brāhmaṇa carries some plant and is dressed with a turban and a short dhoti. *yakṣī* is naked, unlike the depiction of *yakṣī* at Sanchi stūpa No. II.

This is one of the first *Jātaka* story to be carved on any stūpa railing. The same is depicted in monoscenic mode at all sites.

Yakṣī

On the railing pillar of northern entrance, there is a carving of a standing *yakśī* beneath the Aśoka tree with one arm around its trunk, but not with her leg, and the other arm is stretching a branch downwards. According, to Marshall the style of this corner pillar is very archaic and its indecisive characterisation takes us to a time when the repertoire was not yet stereotype. The carving of *yakṣī* here is in a very low relief, it is for the first time that the *yakṣī* is carved on any stone railing of stūpa. This attempt may be traced from the low and flat relief of the ground railing of stūpa No.II at Sanchi, compared to the large size *yakṣī* figures at Bharhut. Prior to this it may be assumed that the sculptors were habitual of carving the same on wooden railings, here and at Bharhut, *yakṣī* is depicted simply as *apsarā,* but not as a Māyā giving birth to Buddha.

Surprisingly, a railing pillar of early Śuṅga times found in Kauśāmbī depicting *Śālabhañjikā* as Māyā. In Kauśāmbī, the ancient capital of Vatsa kingdom, near Allahabad on the left bank of river Yamuna, was excavated by Allahabad university from 1949 till 1961-62 and yielded some interesting early sculptures.**(Plate 3.26)** Most important of these sculpture is a sculpture of *Śālabhañjikā.* For the first time this figure shows the birth of Buddha in "Lumbinivan". To support this fact a pillar with winged animal or probably a winged horse is shown erected by Aśoka, standing nearby the figure of Māyā Devī. She is clasping the bough of the tree, which had entered the garden for *Śālakrīḍā*, the occasion suddenly witnessed the miraculous birth of the Buddha. The animal sculpture on the capital of the pillar appears to be that of a horse which reminds us of the testimony of Hiuen Tsang who mentioned, that the pillar set up by Aśoka at Lumbini was surmounted by a horse figure. [68]

On the right side, a woman is standing with folded hands in adoration. The feature shows typical nativity scenes frequently carved in Gandhāra art as well as Indian Buddhist art in later time. Above the relief is a short votive inscription in early Brāhmī script, (*Pusasa thambho* [*ma...*] means this pillar is pious gift of Pusa.) the palaeography of which indicates a date i.e. roughly the late 2nd or early 1st century BCE. (It is for the first time when among the four great scenes of Buddha's life at least this one (Birth) had been depicted in a narrative form and not by way of a substituting symbol.[69] The *yakṣī* figure carved here is very archaiac. It

indicates the starting phase of carving a *yakṣī* in this manner. Later on *Śālabhañjikā* or *yakṣī* had taken a very important place on the railing of Bharhut and sculptors sucessfully carved *Śālabhañjikā* in such a fantastic and fabulous manner, that they just look like a live figure.

Nāga Muchalinda

According to Marshall[70], on one of pillar at Sanchi stūpa No. II is carved a five hooded snack. A coiled serpent is seen with five heads darting out five forked tongues. On the each side it is carved with a small genie, holding a garland in both hands. It is identified as *Nāga* Muchalinda. It is not a simple depiction of serpent, because two devotees are also shown holding garland in their hand on either side of *nāga*. A simple five hooded *nāga* is also depicted on a pillar in middle medallion. **(Plate 3.27a)**

Nāga Muchalinda is carved very beautifully, with five hoods and coiled body with two devotees on either side of it. The depiction is very much nearer to the Bharhut and Pauni, where *Nāga* Muchalinda is shown with five hoods and coiled body in a lotus pond. The thing which is lacking in it is the empty throne which symbolizes the meditating Buddha amid heavy rainfall. Here one can see very clear depiction of *Nāga* Muchalinda with two devotees. In the lower part of medallion lotuses were also depicted indicating lotus pond near which Buddha was performing meditation.

According to text "*The Udāna or The Solemn Utterances of the Buddha*",[71] on a certain occasion, subsequent to his attainment of Buddhahood, the blessed one dwelt at Uruvelā, on the bank of the Nirañjana at the foot of the Muchalinda tree. At that time, the blessed one, sitting in an attitude of meditation for seven days, experience the bliss of liberation. Then a great cloud appeared, out of season, and after seven days rain, cold winds blew and darkness prevailed. The serpent king Muchalinda, came forth from his hidden ream and winding his coils seven times around the body of the blessed one, he formed with his serpent's hood a great canopy above the head of the Buddha, and he uttered these words to himself; "Neither cold touch nor any heat may effect Buddha, may no gadflies or gnats, or winds, or Sun heat distress the blessed one."

The sky was clear and cloudless, on the seventh day, blessed soul arose from the state of trance and the serpent king loosed his coils encircling Buddha, and stood before him with folded hands for worship.

At Pauni, a stūpa railing depicts an interesting scene of *nāga* Muchalinda. Pauni is situated in district Bhandara, Maharastra. Here, a pillar depicts a five hooded *nāga* king Muchalinda guarding the *bhadrāsana* representing the Buddha; the *nāga* has a coiled body possibly emerging from lotus buds and leaves below; overhead is shown the tree with possibly garland hanging on either side; to the left, below the hood, is the legend "*Mucarido nāgo*" whereas along the right edge is the record of Mahāyasā who donated this pillar. The label attached to the scene recalled the stūpa of Bharhut where most of the life scenes of Buddha were duly labeled. The scene of *Nāga* Muchalinda almost taken a full front part of the pillar, the medallion scheme is discarded here. The *Bhadrāsana* is beautifully carved with two visible pedestals.[72] The same scene is depicted in Bharhut stūpa, where the *Bhadrāsana* is depicted as a simple square seat without pedestals. Here it is also observed that *Buddhapāda* with *chakra* in the middle and *nāgas* head are decorated with the *Triratna*. **(Plate 3.27.b)**The figure is in the round medallion.

In all three sites viz. Sanchi stūpa No. II, Bharhut and at Pauni the story is depicted in monoscenic mode. Indexical sign for the Buddha in Sanchi are two garland bearer devotees on both the side of *Nāga* Muchalinda, in Pauni it is a empty seat and in Bharhut it is both the empty seat and a pair of foot print of Buddha.

Stūpa

At Sanchi stūpa No.II in one of the railing pillar a carving of stūpa with two railing, a *harmikā*, one *chhatra*, adorned with two garlands is also shown in only one place symbolises *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of Buddha. The drum of the stūpa is also decorated. **(Plate 3.28)**

Gaja Lakṣmī

Gaja Lakṣmī is also carved many times in sitting and standing postures. This auspicious hindu deity were the favourite subject of the sculptor of Sanchi stūpa No.1 and II and Bharhut. She had been depicted many times and in many posture on the railings of Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Sanchi stūpa No. I, II and III. As a deity of prosperity. She had been worshiped not in Hinduism, but also in Buddhism and Jainism.

Marshall wrongly interpreted this deity as Māyā, but now she had been fully identyfied as Godess Lakṣmī.The

earliest literary reference to the Lakṣmī is the *Śrī Sūkta*, a late addition to the *Ṛgveda*, but probably dating prior to the time of the Buddha and certainly prior to Pali Buddhist texts. The Goddes *Śrī* is described therein as: "Awakened by the roar of elephants bathed by elephant kings with golden pitchers...Mother *Śrī* lush in a lotus lake ...lotus-faced...lotus eyed, lotus born, darling of Viṣṇu.... Lakṣmī."[73] According to A.K. Coomaraswamy, " By the early Buddhist period, the complete iconography for Gaja Lakṣmī, her connection with the waters, the lotus, and hence with birth and fertility, was firmly established". Her auspicious character was a part of Hindu lore, and was also accepted in Jain litereture. Lakṣmī in a lotus pond, illlustrated by elephants, decorates the early Jain Anantagumphā cave at Khandagiri in Orissa, where no attempt has been made to equate the portrayal with the birth of a *Jina*; it is merely accepted as an auspicious motif.[74] **(Plate 3.29)**

Buddhist symbols

Some Buddhist symbols like *chakra*,*triratna*, full-vase, composit form of *triratna*, *nandi pada* were carved on the railing of stūpa. **(Plate 3.30)**

Western influence on carving and other miscellaneous scenes

Some of the scenes carved on Sanch stūpa No. II were influenced by western art style. It can be noted in scene depicting a warrior fighting with a lion holding a shield and a sword in a western outfit wearing shoes. This motif is a favorite subject of the Achaemenian art of Persepolis denoting the emblem of a great king fighting a leonine monster. It seems that this motif has been borrowed from western Asiatic form in Art. We do not find this type of scene in any other place of early Buddhist art. **(Plate 3.31a)** Winged griffins depicted at this stūpa may also be considered as of foreign influence, the origin of griffin goes back to the ancient world. Gold griffin heads of 7 cms. height belonging to 7th century BCE was found in Ziwiye in Kurdistan. [75]

A scene depicting a man holding a cub, in one hand and a lion, standing in front of him in a peaceful manner. It is shown in a full medallion. **(Plate 3.31b)**

Another scene is depicting a royal punishment. Two persons including *mahāvata* are sitting on an elephant and the elephant is crushing a man. **(Plate 3.31f)**

A *mithuna* figure depicts a man holding the chin of a woman in a affectionate manner. These scenes are very rare and they are depicted neither in the stūpa No. III and I and nor in Bharhut stūpa. **(Plate 3.31g)**

In a scene perhaps, one of the wife of Aśoka is going to worship the stūpa. She wears a big headgear and ornaments, two lady attendants, holding a *chhatra* and fly wisk and a spouted vase. **(Plate 31e)** In two other scenes Aśoka is riding on a chariot probably with his queen accompanied with a elephant rider holding a flag sitting with *mahāvat* and in other scene Aśoka is seen with his two queens on either side and attendants holding *chhatra* and fly whisk in one of their hand.**(Plate 3.31c&d)**. These depictions may be considered of later phase because, the pattern followed, here by the sculptors for carving the full pillar and square reliefs, as well as the subject may be seen at Sanchi stūpa No. I. It may be mentioned here that, in a panel recently found at Kanaganahalli (Sannati) king Aśoka is depicted with his two queens and three attendants holding *chhatra* and *chāuri* and this figure is duly inscribed.[76]

Art of Sanchi stūpa No. II

In this stūpa No. II at Sanchi, the reasons for superior and inferior carvings were due to many sculptors, which were employed and also the result of donors, due to varied donations for the carving of railings, one can notice both inferior as well as superior carving on the railings. Sculptors did not follow a systematic way for carving. In later Buddhist monuments a complete and systematic iconographic program is often visible.

Some of the motifs were adopted from the Sanchi stūpa no II by the sculptor of Bharhut as needed. For example, we find the creepers were carved vertically on the entrance pillars at Sanchi stūpa No. II. But at Bharhut sculptor had carved the creepers horizontally, and also not at the entrance gate, but on the coping stone, and space between the foliage. The same had also been used for the carving of *Jātaka* scenes. **(Plate 3.32)**

Human faces which seems to be of modern day passport size photograph were also carved on Sanchi stūpa No. II at one or two places, but at Bharhut and Bodhagaya sculptor conceived this feature and carved beautiful human faces on almost every middle medallion of the cross bars. **(Plate 3.33)**

In spite of the remarkable sense of decoration, the execution of human form was primitive in technique.

Both the interior and exterior surfaces of the railing and medallions were carved with shallow reliefs as to be viewed by the worshiper performing the *pradakṣiṇā* rites. In later Buddhist monuments a complete and systematic iconographic program is often visible, but here the individual depiction do not seem to form a coherent pattern.[77]

The railing appears to be a direct imitation in stone that of a wooden prototype, its forms and decorations had a long tradition in wood carving prior to their translation into stone.

Here sculptor had also tried to provide three dimensional effects to the figures. One interesting scene is depicted in a medallion shows an elephant with rider. Here sculptor had carved all the four legs, tail and bulky body creating a very funny scene. Elephant is seems to be coming out from the front side. **(Plate 3.34)**

Sanchi stūpa No.II is the first hallmark of the early Śuṅga period. On the iconographic point of views, it may be assign to the second part of the 2nd cent. BCE.

According to Sir John Marshall, "the Sculptures of stūpa II are of slightly earlier date then those of the Bharhut stūpa; but the difference in age could not have been more than two or three decades at the most. Some disparity can no doubt be detected between the two sets of sculpture, but this is to be attributed more to the local factor then anything else, both belong to an identical phase of evolution of Indian art.

The observations that have been made above regarding the archaic features of the art of Bharhut apply equally to that of Sanchi stūpa II. Here also the human figure is guided by the Law of frontality and dependent on memory picture,' although, as Marshall has pointed out, "there is evidence to show that this art was struggling for freedom from the trammels of the rigid orthodox style of which Indian craftsmen had been hitherto accustomed". [78]

On the railings of Sanchi stūpa No.II, there appears a few reliefs in which the figures reveal greater mastery in modeling, freedom of pose and an advanced technique i.e. from a very low and flat relief of the ground railing of Sanchi stūpa No. II an attempt is visible in the reliefs and the large-size human figure from Bharhut; there occurred noticeable developments in Buddhist art.

Part Three

Stage 4 : Developed Stage

As studied, in the previous stage, where majestic, magnificent and enormously carved (with various popular subject of contemporary period) stūpas were shaped by sculptors; tried to create heaven on the earth. It was so profusely carved, that no contemporary architecture can be compared with this phase. They carved in form of a melody on stone. The scenes from nature, religion, myths, legends, faiths, art, craft, celebrations, teachings, folks, palaces, villages etc., were carved on the railings at Bharhut. Each and every stone which were carved here, tells a story, as if they were communicating with tales.

Discovery of the remains of Great stūpa: Stūpa of Bharhut

In the 3rd century BCE Bharhut was a flourishing city on the main highway between Ujjain and Bhilsa in central India. The ancient city is now represented by the village of Bharhut (another local name of the village is Bhaironpur) which is 15 km. south of the Satana station on central railways in Madhya Pradesh. The remains of the great stūpa were discovered by Sir Alexander Cunningham in November, 1873. The work of excavation was conducted by Alexander Cunningham and Mr. J. D. Beglar in the year 1874. Carved stones members of the railings were found scattered in the surrounding area of a village. Uchahara, Batanmara, Pathora and Madhogarh or Patharhat. Apart from solitary pillars, coping stones and a section of the railing, nothing was left at the original site. Cunningham, Hultzsch, Hoernle, Lòders, Coomaraswamy, Barua, Nihar Ranjan Ray and others have worked on the subject of art, architecture and inscriptions from Bharhut.

Architecture

The bas-relief illustration of the railings shows that the stūpa would have been a hemispherical solid dome, standing on a cylindrical base. On the top of the dome, would have a flat platform enclosed with a stone railings and a stone umbrella fixed at the centre, with a circumambulatory path round the stūpa fenced by a circle

of carved railings of massive stones. These stone railings had openings at the cardinal directions and were decorated with gateways. Narratives panels of Bharhut are oblong, square, round, or half round according to architectural needs of that time.

According to Cunningham "whatever little had escaped the destruction and spoliation of the rich heritage of Bharhut, the great stūpa was, by and large, the result of gift of the ordinary Buddhists. Cunningham has listed as many as 208 inscriptions on the coping stones, pillars and railings of Bharhut stūpa. Of these, barring the two royal inscriptions, all are by pious Buddhists monks, nuns, and the lay folk. Sculptural scenes of Bharhut stūpa, have brought to light the finest examples of early Indian sculptural art. The subjects covered by the pioneer Buddhist artists are varied and vast in number. The illustrations include 24 *Jātakas*, 7 historical scenes, 27 miscellaneous scenes, 6 humorous scenes and host of objects of worship.[79]

Around this stūpa there used to be a stone railing consisting of pillars, cross bars and copings, richly decorated with bas-reliefs and the *toraṇa*. The *uṣṇīśa* or coping stone of the railings were carved on one side, a beautiful lotus design with open flowers on a winding stem, and on the other side the same winding stems forms partitions for various scenes, alternating with jewel-garlands and leaves. Some of the railing medallions were developed, in form of open lotus flowers, several with a turbaned human head in the centre, initially, resembling them one or two specimens were noticed in Sanchi stūpa No.II, depicted either in medallion or in half medallion.

Date of construction as observed

Chronologically, Bharhut sculptures immediately follow the art of Sanchi stūpa No. II. Which were considered as the earliest sculptures on stylistic grounds i.e. mid 2nd century BCE. A king named Dhanbhūti is said to have been responsible for the installation of one of the gateways. He was believed to be the king, ruling the region around Mathura and Kauśāmbī slightly before 100 BCE. A votive label on eastern gateway says, within the dominion of the Śuṅga the gateway has been made and the workmanship in stone is produced by Vātsīputra Dhanbhūti, son of Gotiputa Āgaraju and grandson of king Gārgīputra Viśvadeva. (*Suganaṃ raje raño Gāgīputasa Visadevasa pauteṇa Gotiputasa Āgarajusa puteṇa Vāchiputena Dhanabhūtina kāritaṃ toraṇāṃ silākaṃmato ca upaṃṇa.*)[80] and another inscription says,"The gift of prince Vādhapāla the son of king Dhanabhūti". (*Dhanabhūtino rājāno putasa kumārasa Vādhapālasa dānaṃ*)

The stūpa of Bharhut was erected not later than the middle of the 2nd century BCE (150 BCE).[81] The red sand stone which were used in the construction of this stūpa were quarried from the Vindhyas (Kaimur), ushers in a new epoch in indigenous artistic tradition.[82] The remains of this stūpa are at present stored in Indian museum, Kolkata, Allahabad Municipal museum, Ramavana museum, Satana, National museum, New Delhi and Norton Simon museum, Pasadena (U.S.A.).

Subject of representation

There are various types of carvings on the architectural members of stūpa at Bharhut. For the study purpose, it is divided it in two groups, which are as follows:

(a) Buddhist scene which includes, Buddha's life scene, *Jātaka* scenes, Tree's of previous Buddha, historical scenes and sacred symbols.

(b) Non-Buddhist scenes including the sculpture of *yakṣa, yakṣī, nāga,* and other popular deities, warrior, animals, mythical animals, trees, birds and creepers etc.

The subjects represented in the Bharhut sculptures are various and are of the highest interest and importance for the study of Indian art history. Most of the bas-relief carved on these stones illustrated tradition associated with the Buddha's life events, *Jātakas*, worship of stūpa and worship of holy trees, etc. in square, rectangle, round or half round panels or frames.[83]

The importance is chiefly due to the inscribed labels which were attached to many of them and proves their identification. Amongst the historical scenes, the most interesting are the processions of the Raja Ajātśatru and Prasenajīt during their visit to Buddha; the former on his elephant, the later in his chariot, exactly were portrayed in the Buddhist records. Another valuable sculpture is the depiction of the famous Jetavana monastery at Śrāvastī.

The sculptures portrayed here is a simple folk art. The landscape illustrates trees and forests, lakes and rivers and various aquatic animals, besides elephants, deer, monkey

and birds. There is no battle scene or picture of conflict such as it appears in later stūpas. The design of these sculptures reveals only festival events and peaceful serenity. Buddha's mortal presence is represented by symbols like, by his foot print, throne or *āsana*, sacred tree under which he received enlightenment, and by the stūpa which symbolises his *Mahāparīnirvāṇa*." [84]

Bharhut represents an early and archaic phase in classical Indian sculptural art. Compared to the reliefs on the ground on the railing of Sanchi stūpa no II, the plastic style of Bharhut seems to signify a great progress, accuracy of carving, the depth of the reliefs had also increased considerably. The relief, however, is flattened and contained within two faces, the front and the back, and the contours of the forms are cut at right angles to the background. This was the time of, a conscious attempt to integrate the forms by a smooth and gliding linearism and to relate them with one another.[85]

Illustration of primitive tree worship

Worship of *bodhi* trees is one of the important illustrations in Bharhut stūpas railings. But some of the bas-relief illustrates primitive tree worship which survived up to the 2nd century BCE. In the *Bhaya-Bherava-Sutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* [86] Buddha says, that before his full enlightenment he took shelter in the wilds (near Uruvelā) and visited *ārāmachetiyāni*, *Vanachetiyāni* and *rukkhachetiyāni*. *Vṛkṣa chaitya* are generally associated with the *yakṣa* and *yakṣīs*.

One of the bas-reliefs on a coping shows a holy tree with an altar underneath, surrounded by lions and antelopes assembled in a friendly spirit. Inscription above the relief says *Migasamadaka chetiya*, "The *chaitya* that gladdens the heart of the wild animals." **(Plate 3.35a)**

Bas-relief on the coping shows a tree with altar to which three elephants are evidently offering worship; inscription above the relief says *Abode Chaitiyam*, "The *chaitya* on the Arbuda". **(Plate 3.35b, c)**

A bas-relief on the coping represents a *chaitya* tree. The inscription on it reads, *"Jabū Naḍode Pavate"*, which means the Jambu tree on mount Naḍoda. Mount Naḍoda is evidently the Naro range about 6 miles to the north of Bharhut. This bas-relief shows a tree out of which come out two human hands, the one holding a bowl and the other pouring water with a pitcher on the hands of a man seated on a basket. In the outstretched hands we have to recognise a tree spirit or *devatā*. At Bodhgaya similar sculptures can be noticed. The story of a tree *devatā*, who supplied food and drink to travellers is thus told in the *Dhammapada* commentary.[87] **(Plate 3.35d)**

A very similar bas-relief on the pillar of Bodhgaya railing shows a holy tree with an altar underneath. Six elephants are offering worship to the tree. The inscription engraved on it reads; *Bahuhathiko nigodho, Naḍode*. "The Banyan tree *Bahuhastika* on Naḍode. The banyan tree here represents *chaitya* tree and the name *Bahuhastika* denotes, that it was known to be a special object of worship of the elephants.

On one of the fragments of Bharhut railing, it is inscribed as *Bahuhathika āsana* and *bhagvato mahādevasa* ie. the seat of *mahādeva* under the Bahuhathika.[88] The *bodhi* tree is the direct descendent of the *chaitya* tree. On punch mark coin a most common symbol is a tree within railing.

This shows that tree worshiping was very old practice from time before the Buddha. Thus, apart from the *bodhi* tree, the *chaitya* tree is illustrated in Bharhut, Bodhgaya as well as Sanchi stūpa No.II. **(Plate 3.36)** It is to mention here that the c*haitya* tree is the precursor of the *bodhi* tree.

Trees of previous Buddha

The Pali *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and the *Buddhavaṁśa*, a book of poems belonging to the *Khuddaka Nikāya* presents details of previous Buddhas. *Mahāvastu* and *Lalitavistara* supplies, respectively, a list of more than one hundred Buddha. The names of last six Buddha are same in both Pali and Sanskrit text. They were Vipaścit, Śikhī, Viśvabhṛt, Kukutsandha, kāśyapa, Koṇāgamana.

A very important feature on the Bharhut railing is the depiction of the tree of previous Buddha dully inscribed. The description of previous Buddha's are found in the *Dīghanikāya*, *Mahāpadāna Suttanta*, *Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī*, and in *Mahāvastu* etc.[89]

The Vedic text *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* speaks of seven sacred trees. The *samidha* (fuel sticks) of certain *yajñīya* trees were prescribed for use in sacrifices. The Buddhists appear to have adopted the Vedic concept of sacred trees, so much so the seven Buddha attained enlightenment under different trees. The names of some of the trees are same as in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*. [90]

The Bodhi tree of divine master Vipaścit : *Bhagavato Vipasino Bodhi* (Tree, Pāṭali, Trumpet-flower)

In the Mahāpadāna Suttanta, *Dīghanikāya*, it is narrated as "*Vipassī bhagavā Pāṭaliyṭā mūle abhisambuddho*". In *Jātaka Nidāna Kathā*, it is mentioned as *Vipassissa Bhagavato Pāṭli-rukkho bodhi* [91]. The scene depicted a throne of Buddha at the foot and in front of the tree is an elevated platform of solid structure, in front, the face of seat is designed in slanting bamboo reeds. The sculptor has successfully carved the foliage, fruits and branches. On the right side is four devotees, one is kneeling and paying homage to the Buddha with folded hand, three others are offering garland kept in a bucket and one is standing behind the other devotees. **(Plate 3.37a)**

On the other side, one devotee is kneeling down before the throne with folded hand; four devotees are standing folded hand, one devotee standing in the front side is offering a garland. On the throne are scattered flowers offered by the devotees. The sculptor had majestically carved the scene of worship of previous Buddha Vipaścit, symbolically represented by the throne or *Bodhimaṇḍa*. The scene gives a massage that not only the Buddha Śākyamuni was worshipped at that time but the previous Buddha was also equally popular among the Buddhist.

The name of Buddha as "Vipaśyine Buddhāya" also mentioned in *Mahāvastu*, and the text goes like this; When ones, Buddha was in Vaiśālī, there he brought well being both to those within and to those without Vaiśālī, and recited these verses on well being..... "Let those *devās* who believe in Vipaśyin, in Viśvabhū, in Krakuchchhanda, in radiant Kanakmuni, in Kaśyapa, and in glorious Gotama *Śākyamuni*, all of them mighty Buddhas, guard him well, and confer on the race of men". **(Plate 3.37a)**

The *bodhi* tree of divine master Śikhī (*Bhagavato Sikhino Bodhi,* Tree Puṇḍarīka, white mango)

The name of Buddha Śikhī is occurred in *Dīghanikāya* and in *Divyāvadāna*. This *bodhi* tree of previous Buddha Śikhī is not found at Bharhut, perhaps it is missing. According to Buddhaghoṣa's description, the tree of Buddha Śikhī is Puṇḍarīka or white mango. It was adorned with fragrant flowers.

Śāla, the Bodhi tree of divine master Viśvabhṛt: (*Bhagavato Visabhuno Bodhi Sālo*)

The name of Buddha Viśvabhṛt occurred in *Dīghanikāya* and in *Divyāvadāna*. Here the sculptor carved out a fabulous tree adorned with leafy branches and the garlands offered by the devotees, a man on the right is holding a pot in which might be some kind of sacred material like *akṣata, roli, chandan* or turmeric etc. and offering it to the tree with his right hand. One female devotee is kneeling down with folded hands. The woman on the other side is profusely ornamented, offering a long garland, which she has taken out from the basket. A male devotee on her side is kneeling with folded hand and paying his homage to the previous Buddha, Viśvabhṛt. **(Plate 3.37b)**

The *Bodhimaṇḍa* carved is seems to be made of stone and rectangular in shape, beautifully ornamented with garlands on the upper side as well as on the front it is carved with double chain-work design with three parallel rows of lotuses, suspended like bells. On the *Bodhimaṇḍa* is placed a *triratna* and *chakra* both are crowned by an umbrella and with the hanging garlands. **(Plate 3.37b)**

Śirīṣā the *bodhi* tree of divine master Kukutsandha (*Bhagavato Kakusadhasa bodhi Siriso*)

In *Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī*, Buddhaghoṣa describes the *bodhi* tree Śirīṣā of Buddha Kakutsandha, laden with lots of fruits and flowers. Lower portion of medallion is unfortunately mutilated. A female devotee offering garland and a male devotee is offering some sacred thing to the tree. Garlands offered by the devotees are suspended from the branches of the tree.

The *bodhi* tree of divine master Koṇāgamana (Bhagavato Konāgamenasa *bodhi* Uḍumbara)

According to Buddhaghoṣa the tree Uḍumbara can not have flowers. It is old Indian belief that, who sees flowers of the fig-tree, becomes a monarch.[92] Here, we find very clear and simple depiction of *bodhi* tree with branches and clearly visible leaves adorned with lots of garland offered by the devotees. Two female devotees are kneeling down before the *Bodhimaṇḍa* in adoration. One male devotee is offering a garland and on the other side a devotee holding

a bowl in one hand and offering perhaps some fruits or eatable from the other hand to the tree. And a rectangular shaped *Bodhimaṇḍa* and pillar which are supporting the *Bodhimaṇḍa* are octagonal in shape with inverted lotus designed capital.

The *bodhi* tree of the divine master kāśyapa (*Bhagavato Kasapasa bodhi Nyagrodha*)

The *bodhi* tree of the previous Buddha kāśyapa is carved in a very simple manner. The two male devotees are offering garland to the *bodhi* tree with branches and clearly depicted leaves, laden with the garlands offered by the devotees. One female devotee is kneeling down and the other is offering some thing sitting on a small pedestal. **(Plate 37c)** Female devotees are intricately carved by the sculptor. They had very elaborate headgear and profusely ornamented. The female devotee is sitting on pedestal wearing a three stringed girdle. The sculptor did not even forget to draw a vertical line of her back bone above the waist. She is very sincerely performing the rituals. The *Bodhimaṇḍa* is rectangular and plain.

Bhagavato Sākamunino *bodhi* [Aśvattha or Pīpal Tree] The *bodhi* tree of divine master Śākyamuni

The *bodhi*-Tree of Buddha Śākyamuni is the last among the seven Buddha's who is a truly historical personage has naturally received the most elaborate treatment.[93] In the Girnar rock edict No.VIII Asoka declared that "King Priyadarśī beloved of god, visited *Saṁbodhi* ten years after his coronation. Thence started these pilgrimages for *dharma*.... "

A huge structure adorned with *chaitya* windows carved in the fashion of Lomas Ṛṣi cave façade and *chhatras* in the first storey encircled with a railing. The structure above the *Bodhimaṇḍa* has three pinnacles on its barrel vaulted roof. The structure is supported by well carved octagonal pillars having inverted lotus bell and are forming some kind of round shape for circumambulation of the holy tree. *Śālbhañjikās* are also carved on the either side of the *chaitya* windows. Six pillars can be noticed here. *Bodhi* tree is in very huge dimension depicted with branches and leaves adorned with two *chhatras* and garlands offered by the devotees. Two semi divine deities with wings are shown hovering above the tree offering garlands and bouquet. Two palm trees can also be noticed on the either side of structure. Two devotees/semi divine deities while performing circumambulation are surprised to see the giant *bodhi* tree. They have put one hand on their mouth out of surprise. Their *uttarīya* or upper cloths are bellowing with speedy wind so they hold it, with their one hand.

According, to Cunningham they are flying *Gandharva* descended on the upper story and hold the tip of his tongue and forefinger of the left hand apparently giving whistles. But, it is personally felt that it is an act of astonishment as he is surprised by seeing magnificent and giant *bodhi* shrine. The *Bodhimaṇḍa* is rectangular and plain supported by four square pillars with two step of rectangular base. Flowers offered by devotees also scattered upon the *Bodhimaṇḍa*. Two male devotees on either side are kneeling down before the seat. One man standing folded hand and one female devotee is holding something in her upraised hands. Female devotee is ornamented with elaborate headgear, three stringed necklaces, and four stringed girdles. She is wearing diaphanous lower garment and an *uttarīya*. *Bodhi* shrine is all around enclosed by the lower railing. More strikingly an Aśokan pillar surmounted by the elephant is also seen. By this relief we can make out that Aśoka erected a pillar at Bodhgaya to mark the place of Buddha's enlightenment. Two *triratnas* can also be seen on the sacred seat.

In one another relief *bodhi* shrine is depicted in a simple manner. Four devotees are standing with folded hand, out side the shrine. One main and two small arched gateways are depicted in the front and a big vaulted roof, the first floor with provision of railing for circumambulation are also depicted, covering the *Bodhimaṇḍa*. Tree is prominently depicted over the vaulted roof structure. *Bodhi* shrine depicted here is in small dimension.

Bodhi tree shrine are also found depicted from Katar, Mathura and Kauśāmbī. At Bharhut *bodhi* shrine is magnificently carved, whereas at Kauśāmbī and Mathura shows a simple depiction of it. At Katar hanging curtains can also be seen on both sides of *bodhi* shrine. **(Plate 3.38 a, b, c & d)**

According to the definition suggested in the *Mahāpadāna-Suttanata* a *bodhi* tree is one under which a Buddha or more accurately, a Bodhisattvas becomes truly

awakened or enlightened. "Trees there are many others. Of these, only one tree at the foot of which the Buddhas penetrated *bodhi* in the sense of knowledge of four truths constituting the way, are called *bodhi* tree" [94]

The names of the last seven Buddha, two of the names also occur on Aśoka's Nigliva pillar edict; 'Konkamana' and '*Śākyamuni*' in Aśoka's Lumbini pillar edict. The comparative study of Buddha's names and their genitive forms suggests that the dialect or dialects in which the original Buddhist traditions were handed down more phonetically a close resemblance to Pali; for example in Pali: Vipassi- in Bharhut text Vipassī; in Pali: Vesabhu- in Bharhut text Vessabhū; in Pali: Kāsapa- in Bharhut Kassapa etc [95]

On seeing the *bodhi* tree of all seven previous Buddha's (except one sikhī) it can be imagined how they were worshipped in those times. *bodhi* trees with *Bodhimaṇḍa* were worshipped by offering flowers, garlands, bouquet, fruits, and other sacred things like vermilion, turmeric, *akṣata, chandana* (sandal powder) etc. and by performing circumambulation, kneeling, folding hands and pay homage to the *Bodhimaṇḍa* and *bodhi* tree.

These trees of previous Buddha's previously did not had any *maṇḍapa* or structure over the *Bodhimaṇḍa* but after wards a super structure on the *Bodhimaṇḍa* was being constructed by the devotees. Though the sculptor carved only one scene in each relief, devotees illustrated here, are seems to be in motion and worshiping the *bodhi* tree in various ways.

SCENES RELATED TO BUDDHA'S LIFE

Buddha's conception in his mother's womb *(Bhagvato ūkraṁti)*

In *Buddha Charita*, Buddha's conception in his mother's womb is described as follows : "Assuming the form of a huge elephant white like Himalaya, armed with six tusks with his face perfumed with flowing ichors, he entered the womb of the queen of king Śuddhodana, to destroy the evils of the world".[96]

In the relief queen Māyā is seen sleeping on a bed, elephant is hovring from the side, two female are sitting, one is fanning and second is in the sleeping pose beside the bed of Māyā Devī, A long lamp is burning showing the night time, is placed at the right side of Māyā. A spouted vessel is placed under the bed. Māyā Devī and her attendant are profusely ornamented. The legs of the bed are visible in the depiction. The head of the elephant is ornamented with a beautiful necklace and it has only one pair of teeth, although in the *Lalitavistara* the term *Chhaddanta* is used for Bodhisattva. [97]

हिमरजतनिभश्च षड्विषाणः सुचरण चारुभुजः सुरक्तशीर्षः ।
उदरमुपगतो गजप्रधानोललितगतिर्दृढवज्रगात्रसंधिः ॥ १५६ ॥

Upper part of a female deity is seen above the bed of Māyā Devī in folded hand posture. One hand of Māyā Devī is under her head to give the support. This type of depiction can be seen in the pillar of Hathin (Haryana)[98] and at Andher (M.P. near Sanchi) though of later period than Bharhut. Though this depiction is carved in very low and primitive style but it is very important for the iconographic point of view. It is here for the first time at Bharhut, the scene of Māyā Devī's dream is depicted. Later on, we found it on Sanchi stūpa No.1, Amaravati and at Nagarjunakonda. At Andher below the scene of dream, is depicted the episode where noble persons and king is discussing the significance of dream. King is sitting on a high place on a couch. Five steps are seen from the surface up to the king's couch. King is shown with two attendants, one holding *chāuri* (fly whisk). Six noble persons on a couch probably made from wood or bamboo are sitting below. **(Plate 3.39a, b & c)**

Anāthpiṇḍikā presents Jetavana, (having become) its purchaser for a layer of *koṭis: (Jetavana anathpidako deti kotissanthatena keta)*

It is a reference to a well-known Buddhist legend that tells of an incredibly wealthy merchant of Śrāvastī, the capital of Kośala. He desired to bestow on the Buddha and his community of monks a garden out side the town, as a hermitage and site for a monastery search was over when he discovered garden owned by prince Jetā who refuse to sell the park, he agreed on one condition, to obtain this beautiful garden, Anāthapiṇḍikā would have to cover every bit of garden with coins of gold. The rich merchant accepted the offer.

In the relief, to the right side a bullock sitting besides a cart is shown. Coins are unloaded and spread on the ground, the *bodhi* tree is surrounded by the railings and four other trees, two cottages, the huts in which Buddha resided is labeled as *Gaṅdha Kuṭī* and *Kosāmb Kuṭī*, the

donor Anāthapiṇḍikā at the centre of the medallion is standing with a pot to pour its water into the hands of the Buddha according to the religious practice prescribed for the ceremony of giving gifts are depicted. Here, the figure of Buddha is absent. In amasement a man lifts his hand to his mouth. Some people are watching the scene very surprisingly; one person adores the Buddha with folded hand. (Plate 3.40a, b&c) There is no misty superimposition in the illustrations.

At Bodhgaya the method of narration appears more graceful. By that time the *Jātaka* stories were well known and there was no need to depict them in detail. Not only they are shortened but there are no more labels to indicate the stories. A comparison of the jetvana scenes from both places shows this in clarity. While at Bharhut every detail of the story is clearly shown, at Bodhgaya the scene is reduced to just three figures, at the back a man is carrying the gold coins in a basket while two other men are sitting on the ground and paving coins. It is shown; that the labourers are covering the area within the garden with a layer of count less coin as per the terms of sale and purchase has been shown. The banker is absent but the employees are spreading out the coins. Main figure has not been shown repeatedly unlike the representation of the Jetavana scene at Bharhut.

In the earliest phase of Amaravati[99] art we find a unique depiction not only of the scene of *dānam* but the Jetavan also. First scene from the lower side of a stele has depicted the scene of Śrāvastī. The lowest part of the second face of stele is seen, the pinnacle domes of three structures, the lower parts of which are not visible. The following inscription is read as Sāvathi. The scene occurs in the left lower corner of the face. In the foreground there is a pavilion having a curved roof with a pinnacle and surrounded at the base by a three barred railing. The pavilion is approached by a flight of eleven steps, flanked on either side by a railing behind the steps are five posts supporting an arched faced vaulted roof structure within the railing. Another building stands on four pillars, with arched shape, vaulted roof having railing around it, and a tree is seen between the pillars. Whole building complex is encircled with railing. The scene perhaps represents the house complex of Śrāvastī; it is skillfully and elegantly carved.

Lower enclosure wall and the gateway in the centre; separate this scene from the scene below. This scene depicts the purchase of Jetavana by the Anāthapiṇḍikā from the Prince Jetā. A cart can be seen in the front, tilted couchant bullock of the cart is seen at it's nearby. Over the cart is a pavilion with a small structure stand on pillar and encircled with the railing. On the right side there are two persons engaged in spreading the coins, one person seems directing the two other persons he may be Anāthapiṇḍikā. A flight of three steps are visible on the top. The inscription below the cart says, "*Jetavana Anādhapiṇḍakasa ārāmo* (the *ārāma* of Anāthapiṇḍikā in Jetavana). This representation is unique because it illustrate the Jetavan's purchase story is in an elaborate manner, firstly it depicts the Jetavana building complex and in second upper scene it shows the scene of purchase of Jetavana monastery.

The serpent king Erāpata pays homage to the Blessed one (*Erāpato nāga rājā bhagavato vaṁdate*):

The relief immediately below is that of the procession inscribed with the above inscription occurred in the *Dhammapada*. According to the text, there lived during the time of the Buddha Kāśyapa (the legendary Buddha immediately preceding the *Śākyamuni*) a serpent king named Erāpata, due to curse, he lost his natural powers to appear in a human form. The power can only be retain by Buddha in later period. At the court of another serpent king named Sāgara, he met a *yakṣa* who told him about a certain inscription that could be read only after the birth of a Buddha. Two serpent kings therefore took with them a girl of extraordinary beauty, as well as a number of other valuable presents. The Brahman Nārada was living at that time and fearing that he might lose his reputation as a sage if he failed to interpretate the text, he went for the necessary instruction to the Buddha himself, who at that time dwelling in the *mūgdāva* at Banaras. Later, when Nārada came before the serpent king to read the inscription, he bared his right shoulder out of respect for the Buddha and bowed in the direction of the Buddha, although the Buddha was in the *mūgdāva* far away. To the girl, he politely refused and explained the inscription, quickly took himself to the park, where he was freed from the curse. Beautiful girl is seen by the side of river Gaṅgā and sage Nārada wearing monk robust is seen with folded hands. On one side of the river is five hooded serpent king and on the other is two *nāgi* with one hood and a *nāga* with five hoods on his head. Eraptā is in human form adoring and keeling before the *Bodhimaṇḍa*.

In between the river is a narrow space probably a park where birds and trees are depicted in the scene. (Plate 3.41)

Here for the first time sculptor depicted a monk, owing to the need of the story, the monk in the form of Nārada is depicted. The figure of Nārada is in fact the earliest known portrayal of an ascetic or monk wearing *ekāṁsika* drapery and shaven head. [100]

Visit of Ajātśatru to Buddha

This scene is related to the visit of Ajātśatru to Buddha. The story is narrated in the *Sāmañña-Phala Suttanta*. According to the text, "The Blessed One was once dwelling at Rājagūha in the mango grove of Jīvaka the children's physician, along with twelve hundred and fifty of the brethren." On the suggestion of Jīvaka he went to meet Buddha and said, friend Jīvaka, has the riding-elephants made ready."..... "Than the king had five hundred of his women mounted on the she-elephants one on each; and he mounted on the state elephant. And he went forth, the attendants bearing torches, in royal pomp, from Rājagūha to Jīvaka's mango grove. Then he reached to the destination and asked, how can it be that there should be no sound at all, not sneeze nor a cough, in so large an assembly of the brethren, among twelve hundred and fifty of the brethren? Jīvaka answered, "Fear not, O King.....Go on, there, in the pavilion hall, the lamps are burning.' Then the king went on foot and said, "but where, Jīvaka is the blessed one?' That is he, O King, sitting against the middle pillar and facing the east, with the brethren around him.'

Then the king went up, and looked on the assembly, they all were seated in perfect silence, ... Than the king bowed to the Buddha and stretched his joined palms in salutation in order to take his seat aside.[101]

Scene one (Plate 3.42a) depicts king Ajātśatru holds a goad riding his elephant, a attendant carries an umbrella over his head, is followed by three woman sitting and holding goads in one of her hands on the two elephants. In the corner King is shown dismounting from his elephant near the Jīvaka's mango grove, a tree is laden with its fruits i.e. mango is clearly depicted. Jīvakā is indicating the place where the assembly is going on. On the upper side of relief, Ajātśatru is bowing down with folded hand and kneeling before the Buddha and the five royal ladies are standing folded hand in adoration.

In scene two (Plate 3.42b) the *Bodhimaṇḍa* is lavishly carved with double chain work of lotus and palm print in the front and on the upper side it is decorated with creepers or garlands with flowers. Over the *Bodhimaṇḍa* is *chhatra* with hanging garland from three sides. Below the seat is shown Buddha *pāda* incised with the sacred *chakra* in the middle. The sculptor interestingly did not forget to carve the lamp suspended from the roof to specify the night scene. To indicate the mango grove one more tree is carved besides the mango tree. Other devotees are also sitting around the *Bodhimaṇḍa* with folded hand in adoration.

Overall depiction is very charming and the depiction is according to the text, but the figures do not give any expression. One can only make out by their action. The figures are shown in stiffed and archaic manner. Royal elephant's are profusely decorated. Other royal figures including Jīvaka are well ornamented. To show the crowd, sculptor had successfully depicted as many as 29 people in a small relief.

Visit of Prasenajita to Buddha

The relief depicts a scene regarding visit of king Prasenajita of Kośala to Buddha. A two storied magnificent edifice is depicted with upper part having a barrel vaulted roof with eight pinnacle, two *chaitya* shaped window, between the windows a garland is suspended, there is one small and one big railing in the front which is enclosing the upper story and ground a big *dhamma-chakra* is adorned with garland hanging from its axle and above a *chhatra* two devotees are standing on either side in folded hand posture. The inscription inscribed on it says, "*Rājā Pasenaji Kosalo* and *Bhagvato dhammachakaṁ* (King Prasenajita of Kośala and the *dharmachakra* of Buddha). (Plate 3.43)

King Prasenajita is going to visit the shrine in his chariot drawn by the four horses. One man with him is holding a *chhatra* over his head and the other is *chāuri* (fly whisk), he is standing in the middle perhaps, drawing the chariot himself. Four men are also going ahead riding on a horse or going by foot. Shrine has a gateway on the right side carved with *chaitya* arch and barrel vaulted roof. The shrine is enclosed with a railing. From the right side of the shrine two elephants with their riders are shown coming. Some horse riders are going out from the gateway of the shrine. The shrine is known as *Puṇyaśālā* erected by king Prasenajita in honour of the Buddha in the city of Śrāvastī, his royal

capital. The account of the presenajit's visit to Kośala is given by Burnouf from a Buddhist *sutra* in which the king is made to call for his chariot, as he wished to show honour to Buddha.[102] Several episodes of King Prasenajita visiting Buddha are mentioned in the *Dharmachaitya Sutta.*[103]

Sculptor represented a very lively scene of king Prasenajita visiting Buddha. He is symbolically depicted through a huge sacred wheel. It seems that after the death of Buddha the *Puṇyaśālā* was still remembered and worshiped by the devotees and a wheel was placed in side the shrine. When the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited Śrāvastī, the *Puṇyaśālā* (Hall of religious merit) of Prasenajita were already ruined, on the top of which the people had built a small stūpa.[104]

Buddha's descendent from the *Tuṣita* heaven on earth at Saṁkāśya

Buddha visited the *Trayastriṁśa* heavens to preach his doctrine to his mother Māyā Devī and the other divinities. After preaching them, he came down from the *Tuṣita* heaven on earth at Saṁkāśya after three months. **(Plate 3.44a, b & c)**

In the center of the Bharhut relief stands a triple ladder with a footprint of the Buddha on the highest and lowest step to represent his descent from the *Trayastriṁśa* where he was believed to have gone to preach the law to his mother. Other symbols of Buddha are carved on the left, namely a throne, an umbrella and a sacred tree. Three ladders are depicted in the center. Two on either side are for Indra and Brahmā the middle for Buddha. To show that Buddha is getting down from the heaven a foot print with the depiction of *chakra* is shown on the first step of middle ladder and second feet with the depiction of *chakra* is depicted on the last step. Left side of the ladder is shown a tree with an *Āsana* and a *chhatra.* Three *gandharvas* are shown hovering from sky and paying homage to the Buddha with flowers holding in their hands. People are also standing in the right, left and front side of the ladder with folded hands. Here, Buddha is symbolically presented by one foot when he started from first step and one foot on the last step and than when he descended his presence is shown by empty throne decorated with flower and a *chhatra* under a tree.

At Mathura, three stairs are shown and a devotee is kneeling down on the middle stair. On the upper part of stair, instead of Buddha *pāda* is shown *chuḍa* or head dress of Buddha.

Reliefs from Gandhāra shows three trees in three stairs, on either side Brahmā and Indra are shown with folded hands. In lower part of the middle stair one devotee is kneeling near the Buddha *pāda.* In these three reliefs, Bharhut relief has executed the scene in a better style.

Indra and his harpist visit the Buddha in Indraśaila cave

Once, Buddha was meditating in a solitary cave, located in one of the mountains near Rājagūha. Indra and his harpist Pañchaśikha visited him and witnessed the effulgence that emanated from the Buddha. Pañchaśikha sang some hymns in his honor and Indra worshipped him. Here, Indra is seen with Pañchaśikha out side the cave, with folded hands. Stone paved path are also seen in relief. It is a monoscenic depiction. **(Plate 3.45)**

Chuḍā Mahā or "Great Headdress" (Head Ornaments) which comprised the hair as well as the headdress of prince Siddhārtha

The artists of Bharhut and Sanchi were acquainted with the legend of the Buddha's life in a more modern form than as mentioned in the great Piṭaka texts. The latter do not contain the miraculous descent of the Buddha from the heavens of the thirty-three gods, which is represented at both Bharhut and Sanchi; nor do these Pali texts contain the miracle of Śrāvastī, which is delineated at Bharhut. It goes with out saying that the original canon was composed in Magadhi. According to Oldenberg, "two scenes in the legend of the Buddha, which are depicted at Bharhut, are strange to Pali canon, namely, the ascension to the heaven of the thirty-three gods; this scene is also represented at Sanchi and the great miracle of Śrāvastī. It is possible to add one more scene of this class ie. *Chuḍā mahā.* At Bharhut the scene is depicted very lively. **(Plate 3.46a, b)**

One of the bas-relief from the western gate at Bharhut represents a group of musicians accompanying with their instruments the movements of a troupe of dancers in the front of two edifices one on the right, the palace of Indra from the balcony of which the go looks down upon the festival, surrounded by his women, while from the upper stories the servants shows their heads from the windows,

the other to the left of the *chaitya* through the open door of which notice laid on the alter the tuft of hair of the Bodhisattva. The dome of *chaitya* bears an inscription *Sudhamma deva sabhā Bhagavato chuḍā mahā* (The great head dress of Buddha in assembly hall of the *devas*.)

The same term is employed in the *Lalitavistara* when after having described how the Bodhisattva cut off his hair and threw it up in the air, where it was received by the thirty-three gods, it adds; "And to this day among the thirty-three gods, the festival of the tuft of the hair is celebrated". This legend is not known in the Pali text except *Nidānakathā* according to which the hair of the Buddha, when it was cut off and tossed up into their, was immediately seized by Indra who conveyed it to heaven, where a stūpa for it was erected; but it has no knowledge of the festival annually celebrated in commemoration of this events in the abode of the thirty-three gods.[105] Henry Clarke Warren in his book Buddhism in Translations, had written this episode very beautifully which is as follows:

"His hair he cut, so sweet with many pleasant scents,
This chief off men, and high impelled it toward the sky,
And there god Vāsava, the god with thousand eyes,
In golden casket caught it, bowing low his head."[106]

This depiction indirectly indicate the great renunciation of Buddha as after leaving the palace he cut his hair with his sword and threw it in the sky.

In Katar *chuḍā mahā* is shown on a throne inside the barrel vaulted shrine with *chaitya* arched gateway. Two curtains are also shown hanging on either side of the gateway.

Divinities worshiping Buddha after his enlightenment

The relief depicts the episode when after attaining the supreme enlightenment Buddha was worshiped and venerated with the sacred scented water with vases by the thousands of Gods. In *Lalitavistara*[107] the episode goes like this;

वादित्रसहस्रैरपि समन्ततो देवकोटिनयुतानि ।
अतुलां करोन्ति पूजां अप्सरनयुतैः सह समग्राः ॥ (1299)

Nineteen deities and one *yakṣa* carrying a jar of water can be seen in the relief. One tree shown between the gods is probably a *bodhi* tree. Here, Māra is shown sitting under the tree scratching the earth with a pointed thing. He is disappointed with this great achievement of Buddha.[108] He also begged Buddha's life but, Buddha refused his prayer. The relief below this showing the celebration going on in heaven and heavenly nymphs are dancing singing and playing the instruments like harp, drum etc. **(Plate 3.47a,b)**

Elephant rider carrying the relics of Buddha

In the *Mahāparnibbāna Suttanta*, it is narrated that the relics of the Buddha were divided into eight parts with a view to enshrining them in *thūpas* or sacred cairns; the pot containing the relics was used for making a *kumbha thūpas* and the embers for making an *aṅgāra thūpa*. [109] This pillar depicts the episode when the relics of Buddha were distributed among the various states. Here interestingly elephant carrying the relics is carved in bigger dimension than the other two elephants which are on either side and are not carrying the relics but joining the procession. Coping stone also depicts the elephants carrying the relic casket and due to joy of gaining the share of relics nymphs and *apsarās* are dancing singing and celebrating the occasion. **(Plate 3.48a, b, c)**

Worship : A step forward towards the iconic phase

In *Kāliṅgabodhi Jātaka*, [110] the Buddha says that there are three types of shrines by which he could be represented, when he is absent or on a pilgrimage:

(a) *Śārīrika chaitya*, shrine containing his bodily relics;

(b) *Pāribhogika chaitya*, shrine containing the articles used by Buddha;

(c) *Uddeśika chaitya* The Buddha advises that the shrine of bodily relics is made when a Buddha enters the *nirvāṇa*.

In early Buddhist art we find pillar worship, *bodhi* tree worship, stūpa worship, *chakra* worship etc. **(Plate 3.49a, b,c,d,e)** In *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, Buddha described the ways of worship of stūpa of *Tathāgata Devarāja*. He says that the *Tathāgata Devarāja* after his *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, his relics will be placed in seven jeweled stūpa and *devā*, human beings will venerate this huge stūpa with *dhoop, gaṅdh, mālā, vilepan, churṇa, chivar, chhatra, dhwaja*, and *patākā*, and will prey him saying the story and songs.

सर्वे च तत्र देवमनुष्याः पूजां करिष्यन्ति पुष्पधूपगन्धमाल्यविलेपनचूर्ण चीवरच्छत्रध्वजपताकाभिर्गाथाभिर्गीतेन च भिष्टोष्यन्ति। ये च तं स्तूपं प्रदक्षिणं करिष्यन्ति प्रणामं वा तेषां केचिदग्रफलमर्हत्त्वंसाक्षात्करिष्यन्ति केचित् प्रत्येकबोधिमनुप्राप्स्यन्यते। [111]

They will circumambulate the stūpa of *devarāja* and will offer the prayers with folded hands. This description is exactly witnessed in the relief carved during this period.

Selected *Jātaka* scenes from Bharhut:

The Buddha's birth as Sujāta (*Sujāto Gahuto Jātaka*)[112]

The story is depicted in monoscenic mode of narration where in one relief only one important scene of story is depicted. The scene exhibits a boy (Bodhisattva) sitting before the ox, and trying to feed a bunch of grass. A man is standing behind him. Sujāta was a Bodhisattva. His father was sad and full of grief due to sudden demise of his grand father, Bodhisattva wanted his father to over come the situation, all his efforts were useless therefore he started feeding the dead ox. His father was informed about his son's state of mind, son was consoled by the father that corpse can't be raised to life, to which, son answered, as corpse can't be fed, similarly why should you weep over the ashes of your father. Hearing this he understood, what his son meant. He discarded his grief and he acknowledged Sujāta's wisdom. The depiction is monoscenic and narrating only one episode of the story. This scene is depicted on coping stone though the space for carving is less still the sculptor tried to depict as many things as possible. (Plate 3.50)

Daḍanikamo chakamo Jātaka "The walk wherefrom escape is difficult" [113]

In this relief one can notice a altar or a throne occupying the middle place behind this are four lion with gaping mouths, and on the right, five men are standing in adoration and sixth person is sitting to the left is in miserable attitude. While in front are two gigantic human heads and a human hand between throne and altar, the properly arranged wood are burning.

According to Cunningham this is the scene of one of the 16 Buddhist hells, or places of punishment. But according to B.M. Barua this scene is depicted *Uraga Jātaka* which is as follows; The Bodhisattva was at a time brāhmaṇa who lived in village with his wife, two daughter, a son and a son-in-law. One day while working in the field his son was bitten by a poisonous snake and died. In spite of this incident neither Bodhisattva nor his family member wept. It was a great wonder for Śakra, king of the gods that while the dead body was being cremated none of the family member including him shed tears. Forth while the Śakra came down to the cremation ground and after uttering the lion' roared, stood on one side asking why they did not wept? Bodhisattva gave him a satisfactory answer, that death is the path where from escape is difficult. Śakra was so pleased with them that he filled their house with treasures beyond imagination. In this depiction Śakra is sitting in left side in grief, to the right, brāhmaṇa and his four family members are standing with folded hands. Four lion behind altar symbolises the lion's roar and preceding Śakra's appearance. Altar is built for *sadhus/aghorees*[114] who worships in *śamśāna*. Altar has five finger prints and flowers on it as altar are also worshiped by the people in vicinity. According to Barua this altar is designed as a protection of fire against the wind and signifies symbolically, as explained in a Vedic hymn a dividing line between the living and the dead. [114] A snake is seen near the fire and a dead body also lies on another side. Two ferocious human faces are the *yakṣas* living in the śamśāna. These types of *yakṣas* are mentioned in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* , who eats away the dead body. (Plate 3.51)

यसुरौद्रचित्ता पि वसन्ति यक्षामनुष्यकुणपानिविकड्ढमानाः। 47) [115]

Here the fire symbolises two incidents : 1. Brāhmaṇa's son was bitten by snake while he was burning the weeds another, burning of his dead body on a funeral pyre. The scene has successfully narrated the three episodes at a time. 1. Brāhmaṇa's son burnt the weeds heaped up in one place and a snake comes out of it. 2. Dead body of boy lying down for cremation. 3. Śakra had come with lion roar and Brāhmaṇa family paying homage to him.

Laṭuvā Jātaka [116]

This is a story of clever quail. Once the Bodhisattva was born as an elephant leading a herd consisting of 80,000 elephants and dwelt in Himalaya. A quail laid her eggs on the feeding ground of the elephants. Her young ones were unable to fly. So she prayed to Bodhisattva to be careful while passing from that place. Bodhisattva and other elephants cautiously passed without doing any harm to the

young birds but in the mean while a single malicious elephant crushed the young birds. Bird wanted to teach him a lesson, so she went to her friend; crow and asked him to peck out the eyes of that elephant by striking his beak. After this she went to a blue fly whom she asked to drop its eggs upon the eyes put out by the crow. Now after this she asked the frog to take his stand and croak on the top of the mountain to attract the blind elephant. Elephant in the search of water followed the direction from where the frog was crocking. The elephant climbed up the mountain thinking he might get water there. The frog again crocked, the elephant moved forward and fall into a deep lake and died. **(Plate 3.52)**

Medallion depicts seven episodes at a time. Bodhisattva and other elephants are passing peacefully without doing harm to the young birds. The quail is praying to elephant not to crush her young birds she is shown sitting on a tree. But, ignoring her request elephant is crushing the birds under his hind legs. Crow is pecking on his eyes. Fly laid her eggs in his eyes. Frog crocked on the mountain peak and roguish fells down in the deep lake. Sculptor has skillfully, majestically depicted all important episode of this story. Sculptor has carved minutely, many important episodes of the *Jātaka* story in a single relief.

Migapotaka Jātaka [117]

The story is depicted in monoscenic mode of narration where in on relief only one important scene of story is depicted. Once, an ascetic found a deer in the forest, he was brought up by him with great affection, one day deer died of indigestion, ascetic mourned on his death as if he has lost his own son. His grief was so deep that the Bodhisattva who born as Śakra, king of heaven came down to teach the hermit about death it is necessary and comes to every one and he should not weep like a child for the cause. Dr. Hultzsch's identified this Jātaka. The depiction is monoscenic. It narrates only one episode of story. Sculptor has tried to give a forest scene by carving of two trees and a round hut. Ascetic is seen holding a horn of deer trying to shake the body of deer out of remorse than came the Śakra the Bodhisattva from heaven and gave sermon not to grieve as death is ultimate truth for every living being. Sculptor has skillfully depicted all necessary elements of the story. **(Plate 3.53)**

The *Kukkuṭa-Biḍāla Jātaka* [118]

This *Jātaka* was told by Buddha in Jetavana. This *Jātaka* falls under the category in folklore. According to the story, once Bodhisattva was born as cock living with his kinsfolk. Near by lived a cat, who cunningly eat away all the kinsfolk except Bodhisattva. She made a plan and proposed him to marry her. The Bodhisattva said, beasts and birds can never marry. You have eaten all my kinsfolk, and now you have come to allure me. Cat's plan was in vain she went away disappointedly. The scene is monoscenic and depicts only one important episode when the cat is proposing to cock. The creepers are creating a romantic atmosphere. Cat is sitting in her usual posture where as cock is sitting on the tree for his safety. **(Plate 3.54)**

Sūchī Jātaka [119]

The story is depicted in monoscenic mode of narration where in one relief; only one important scene of story is depicted. This scene has no label; Barua identified it as *sūchī Jātaka.* In this story a man born in poor smith's family, wanted to marry a beautiful rich girl of his own cast. He made the delicate strong needle which pierced dice and floated in water. He went to sell it in the village where the rich smith lived, standing at the door of which he cried for a buyer. His sweet voice stole the heart of the girl and He could successfully impress smith by showing his invention. At last he married to the smith's daughter. Here, the scene depicted is monoscenic and depicts the single episode in which Smith's daughter is conversing with the Bodhisattva and rich smith is sitting inside the house on a couch made of bamboo or wood. The barrelled roof architecture is also shown suggesting that the smith is inside of the house. The girl is bejewelled with lots of ornaments. **(Plate 3.55)**

Mahākapi Jātaka [120]

The story is depicted in synoptic mode of narration where in one relief many important scenes of story are depicted. Bodhisattva was ones born as monkey king and lived near the Himalaya on a huge banyan tree with his troop. Its fruits were larger than Palmyra, and possess divine fragrance and flavour. When the king of Banaras came to know this fact, he proceeded to see it with his great retinue. He ordered his archers to guard the tree. At midnight

Bodhisattva and his retinue came to eat the fruits. The king ordered to surround the monkey with arrows. The Bodhisattva made of a plan to save life of his kinsfolk. He tied his waist with a root and stretched him self to hold the branch of another tree situated on the bank of river Ganga so that the other monkeys may cross the river and go to safer side. He made a sort of a bridge. Among his troop there was a wicked monkey Devadatta who while crossing the river harmed the monkey king. Seeing this, king of Banaras got impressed with the monkey king and ordered his men to get down the monkey king gently. Sitting on a couch with king Banaras he explained all the matter and also teaches him about the duties of the king. After that the monkey king died. Two trees and river Ganges with fishes in it are shown in the relief. **(Plate 3.56)**

The relief depicts the following scenes:

1. Bodhisattva tied his one foot with a root and holding a branch of another tree of other side of river.
2. Six monkeys are in different position on one tree.
3. One monkey is ready to cross and one wicked monkey jumped forcefully with an intention to harm the Bodhisattva.
4. One monkey had already reached to the other tree.
5. Two men spread a sheet having slanting line design for the monkey king to bring down him safely.
6. Bodhisattva came down and with folded hand gives respect to the king of Banaras.
7. King of Banaras and monkey king both seated on couch face to face conversing with each other.

The sculptor has successfully carved all important episodes of the story. The human faces are facing front side as if they are ready for a camera click. Monkey king and the wicked monkey (Devadatta) were intentionally carved bigger in size to the other monkeys. River is shown very small as if the trees are very big and tall and the monkey's positions are at higher level.

Ruru Jātaka [121]

The story is depicted in synoptic mode of narration where in one relief many important scenes of story are depicted. According to this *Jātaka* the Bodhisattva was born as a deer golden in colour. He was living in a grove of śāla tree. He looks very deferent and unique among the other deer. The son of a merchant, oppressed by his charm, jumped in the Ganges. Deer king heard a cry and went down the river to save him placing him upon his back. He provided shelter to the man for some day. When he took leave of him, deer king told him not to tell anything about him to any one. But merchant's son told the entire story to king of Banaras and took him to the site. King's men surrounded the golden deer with bow and arrow. But deer requested not to harm them. Impressed by his sweet voice, he not only freed him but gave a boon of safety for all creatures including the deer king. In the relief two trees and five deer and a river is shown suggesting the *śāla* grove herd of deer living in the vicinity. **(Plate 3.57)**

Four episodes of story carved on relief are:

1. The deer king is saving the son of merchant taking him on his back out of the river.
2. The king of Banaras is aiming at the deer king.
3. Deer *Ruru* is sitting under the tree and king of Banaras and his men are standing folded hand out of respect.
4. The Bodhisattva is carved bigger in size as he is the main figure of the story. He is majestically carved by the sculpture.

Vessantara *Jātaka* [122]

The story is depicted in monoscenic mode of narration, where in one relief; only one important scene of story is depicted. Buddha in previous life was prince Vessantara who out of generosity gave his kingdoms prized rain-bestowing elephant. He leaves for exile along with his two children and wife, on his way he gave his horses, chariot, children even his wife. Due to intervention of the God Indra it resulted in the happy reunion of king's family. Here the relief depicts the brāhmaṇa asking for the elephant and king is pouring water from spouted jug, an act of giving the *dānam*. **(Plate 3.58)**

IMPORTANT AND UNIQUE DEPICTION FROM VARIOUS SITES

Unique depiction of last three months of the life of Buddha in a stele belonging to earliest phase of art at Amaravati (2nd century BCE) [123]

Tale described here was unearthed in the year 1958-59. The three faced stele depicts Buddhist scene, almost all bears inscribed explanatory labels, as found with scenes of

the Bharhut sculpture. The sculptures pertain to the last three months of the life of Buddha. It is imperative to give a summary from the *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* [124]

During his last days Buddha stayed at Vaiśālī, Pāvā and Kuśīnagara. Buddha arrived at Vaiśālī from Naḍika where he resided at Ambrapali's grove and Beluvana near Vaiśālī and again returned to chāpāla *chaitya* at Vaiśālī. At Vaiśālī, Māra asked him to pass away. Māra was informed by the Buddha that He would die within three months. Buddha also told Ānanda that "Thus Ānanda, the *Tathāgata* has now today at the chāpāla *chaitya* consciously and deliberately rejected the rest of his term of life." From Chāpāla *Chaitya* Buddha resided at Mahāvana Kūṭāgāra. One day he went Vaiśālī for alms, before leaving the place he gazed at Vaiśālī at 'elephant eye look' and said Ānanda that this was his last look at Vaiśālī. From the Vaiśālī Buddha and his followers proceeded to Pāvā and had a meal offered by the Chunda as a result he fell sick on his way to Kuśīnagara. Then he went aside from the path to the foot of a tree, where Ānanda prepared a seat for him out of four fold of a *Saṅghāṭī* to rest on. He desired to drink water; Ānanda went to fetch water from nearby streamlet. The water of streamlet was dirty because five hundred carts had passed just then. Ānanda requested him to pass over the river Kakutthā. But again Buddha asked him to fetch water from same streamlet. Surprisingly, the streamlet began to flow very transparent and clear water. Ultimately Buddha quenched his thirst by drinking water brought by Ānanda. After that Buddha converted a Malla boy Pukkssa who presented Buddha a pair of robes of golden hue. Buddha and other crossed the river Kakutthā where he bathed and drank water and took rest over a seat prepared by the robes given by the Pukkssa. Thereafter, he proceeded towards Kuśīnagara and took his last breath. **(Plate 3.59)**

First face, scene 1 :

Inscription relating to this scene says- *Bahuputra-chaitya* and the *chaityas* of Vaiśālī (*Bahuputa-chetiya Vesālakāni chetiyāni*)

The lower part of the left corner depicts three trees. Two trees are enclosed by a railing. Tree to right is worshipped by two devotees, one with folded hand and other is holding a child in her left hand. This sacred tree is the Bahuputa *chaitya*. Buddha mentioned it when he resided at chāpāla *chetiya*[125] He said about it, "How delightful a spot, Ānanda, is Vaiśālī, and the Udena *chetiya*, and the Gotamaka *chetiya*, and the Sattambaka *chetiya*, and the Bahuputta *chetiya* and the Sārandada *chetiya* and the Cāpalā *chetiya*". According to Buddhaghoṣa, there was here a many branched tree, where people prayed for son. From the *Atharvaveda* we learn that at the time of its composition, the pīpal was worshipped for victory over enemies and birth of the male progeny.[126] That's why perhaps a devotee after worshiping the tree god, blessed with a child and after that he visited the *chaitya*, as is seen in the relief, he is holding a child, in the scene 1.

Scene 2 :

Inscription relating to this scene says- In chāpalā *chetiya* Māra begs renunciation (of life). To right of the scene-1 is a kneeling figure with folded hand praying the Buddha-pāda placed on the pedestal. The person is Māra wearing a dhoti, requesting Buddha to die. Inscription written here as (*chāpalā chetiya mār" yāchte osaṭh-ita(ti)*). In chāpāla *chetiya* Māra begs renunciation (of life). Here the episode of "Māra begging life of Buddha" is depicted. The text runs like this, (When the Buddha resorted at Chāpāla *chetiya)* "Now not long after Venerable Ānanda, had been gone, Māra, the evil one approached the blessed one, and stood beside him. And so standing there, he addressed the blessed one in these words: "Pass away now, Lord, from existence; let the blessed one now die. Now is the time for the blessed one to pass away.....And when thus spoke, the blessed one addressed Māra, the evil one and said O' Evil One make thyself happy, "At the end of the three months from this time the *Tathāgata* will die." Thus the blessed one while at the Chāpāla *chetiya* deliberately and consciously rejected it the rest of his allotted sum of life. [127]

Scene 3 :

Over the human figure is the *chaitya* arched structure. Inside it, is seen a pedestal of beaded boarder and a *chhatra* over it. Below is the pair of foot of Buddha. The inscription in the left corner over the roof of hut says:

{vesa}liya {ye} viharati Mhāvane kuḍāgāra{sa}laya.

The lord dwells in the Kūṭāgārā cottage in *mahāvana* at Vaiśālī. As described above Buddha proceeded to mahāvana Kūṭāgārā from Chāpāla *chetiya*. Text runs like this, "Come Ānanda let us go to the Kūṭāgārā hall, to the mahāvana.[128]

Scene 4 :

Over the first scene is an inscription reads "The elephant look" (*Nāgā{pa}logana*) text runs like this- "Now the Blessed One early in the morning robed himself, and taking his bowl, entered Vaiśālī for alms, and when he had passed through Vaiśālī, and had eaten his meal and was returning from his alms-seeking, he gazed at Vaiśālī with an elephant look and addressed the venerable Ānanda, and said This will be the last time, Ānanda, that the Tathāgata will hold Vaiśālī. Come Ānanda, let us go on to Bhanda-*gama*."[129] This represents the site of the last look of Buddha at Vaiśālī, Both Fa-Hiyan and Hiuen Tsang saw a stūpa on that spot.[130]

Scene 5 :

The depiction of flowing water waves, a bowl and an oblong seat below the tree, over the first three scenes. Unfortunately the inscription inscribed along with this scene is now lost, but the scene is definitely depicted the scene of a streamlet from which Buddha asked Ānanda to fetch water as he was thirsty. The text in *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* runs like this, "Now the Blessed One went aside from the path to the foot of certain tree; and when he had come there he addressed the Ānanda and said; fold I pray you Ānanda the robe and spread it out for me. I am weary Ānanda and must rest a while.....:" Ānanda spread out the robe folded four fold. Again when he seated, he said; "Fetch me, 'I pray you Ānanda some water. I am thirsty, Ānanda and would drink.' Venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One, but Just now lord, about five hundred carts have gone over. That water stirred up by the wheels has become shallow and flows and turbid. This river Kakuttha lord, not far off, is clear and pleasant, cool and transparent easy to get down into and delightful. There the blessed one may both drink the water and cool his limb. Again second and third time blessed one asked him to fetch the water from the streamlet. Ānanda taking a bowl went down to the streamlet and lo, the streamlet which, stirred up by the wheels, was but just now become shallow, and was flowing fouled and turbid, had begun , when the venerable Ānanda came up to it, to flow clear and bright and freed from all turbidity."[131]

Scene 6 :

A fragment of the last is seen on the top most part of the stele. It depicts a figure with folded hands in unusual position. The back of a man is visible beside the figure one. Inscription on the extreme top reads: (*Sālavane bahgavato parinivate*) "The extinction of Bhagavān Buddha in *Śāla* grove". The text of *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* runs like this, "Now the Blessed One addressed the venerable Ānanda, and said; come Ānanda, let us go on to the *sāla* grove of the Mallas the Upavattana of Kusinārā on the further side of the river of the Hiranyavati'. .....[132] "When the blessed One died, of those of the brethren who were not yet free from the passions, some stretched out their arms and wept, and some fell headlong on the ground, rolling to and fro in anguish at the thought; too soon has the Blessed One died too soon has the light gone out in the world."[133]

Stūpa of Rāmagrām

A fragment from a door architrave is recovered from Sarnath. According to Buddhist mythology it is an important piece, it narrates the story of the stūpa of Rāmagrāma erected by the nāgas. As after the cremation of Buddha, his relics were distributed in eight parts and the stūpas were erected over it. Rāmagrāma stūpa was also one of these kind which could not be opened by king Aśoka in the later period due to heavy guarding by the *nāgas*. **(Plate 3.60)**

In this relief, Stūpa is seen encircled and protected by serpents and elephants and flying deities are venerating over stūpa with garlands. Here stūpa is depicted in early form. Only lower railing is depicted. *Harmikā* has a railing and altar with one *chhatra* and with two garland and two flags on either side of it.

Summary

At Bharhut sculptor worked as per the text, but also in accordance with living oral traditions. It may be assumed that the literary tradition was at times influenced artist. Upon art and literature there was mutual influence.

The Bharhut reliefs are generally accompanied by contemporary descriptive inscriptions. Here Buddha is absent but his presence is shown through the depiction of *bodhimaṇḍa, chhatra, chakra, charaṇa* etc. On the other hand, in all *jātaka* scenes the future Buddha 'Bodhisattva' is visually represented.

The general appearance of the richly sculptured pillars, crossbars and coping stones of the Bharhut railing is more lavish than the railing of stūpa II at Sanchi, the Bharhut railing bears a carved design on every element of its member

i.e. on gateway, pillar, railing, railing pillars, coping and cross bars.

The *triratna* is a composite art-symbol that appeared in the Indian sculptures at Bharhut, Sanchi, and Amaravati during the 2nd-1st century BCE. This symbolises the Buddha, *dharma* and *saṅgha.*

During the Śuṅga period the sculptures were mainly decorated on the railings of the stūpas. These sculptures depicts *jātaka* legends, Buddha's life-scenes, plants, trees, birds, animals, fabulous creatures, human figures, building architecture etc., and thus, representing the folk art.

The artistic evidence from early sites like Sanchi stūpa No. II, Bharhut indicates that Buddhist followers revered *nāgas* and *yakṣa* with the deities which played an important role within the local Buddhist tradition. The Bharhut railing is studded with *yakṣa* figures, from the *nāga* chakravāka scene at the entrance of the stūpa, to the life size *yakṣa's* dominating the whole enclosure. It is interesting to observe that the community of worshipers represented in the Bharhut reliefs consists of laymen; gods flying celestial but never monks.[134] Only at one depiction at Bharhut a figure of monk is depicted.

Among the recurrent motifs is rich ornamentation by peacock, elephant worshiping *vṛksa chaitya* or stūpa, stūpa were being worshiped by the devotees (human beings, divinities and semi divinities, and wild animals as well), *chakra*, full vase, (*bhadra ghaṭa*) and Gaja Lakṣmī in sitting as well as in standing posture venerated by the elephants from both the side; was very popular at Bharhut.

In several scenes the depiction of life-episodes of the Buddha at Bharhut, some palm-prints appear in relief, normally on the pedestal. In one of scene four palm-prints are shown in front of the pedestal on which the dish containing the locks of hair of Buddha is placed. Similar, palm prints have also noticed in the same position in another scene depicting the descent of Buddha. Another Bharhut sculpture shows, the foot prints of the Buddha marked with *dharma chakra* on a highly stylised empty throne, decorated with three palm prints under an umbrella. The depiction of hand prints on *āsana* or stūpa is hardly seen in any other Buddhist site (very few are seen in Mathura and Musanagar in U.P.) it is a unique representation in Bharhut sculptural art. It may probably the result of folk culture worship; to print their palm on the sacred place, this tradition still persists in central and eastern part of India. In Krishna temple of Kosi (near Mathura Ancient name Kokilāvana), even today the devotees paste their handprint with turmeric and print it on the wall out side of temple near banyan tree.

Most of the Bharhut reliefs indicating the presence of the Buddha do not emphasize the narrative content of the story. The Bharhut sculptors seem to have opted for static representation of the Buddha's life. The only image from Bharhut that can be related to the great departure is present on a pillar noticed by Alexander Cunningham in the village of Patarora near Bharhut in 1873, today; it is in the collection of the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, U.S.A.[135]

Variety of *jātakas* is depicted specially on coping stone with labels suggest that *Jātakas* were very deeply rooted in the contemporary society.

Another subsidiary trend is also evident in the art of Bharhut. A few of the reliefs are quadrangular in outline, emphasising compact compositions with schematic rows of harsh figures, similar to the lines of the frame. Not swayed by the gentle and mellifluous curves, the figures are more or less static in character, disturbed only by sharp contrasts of lights and shades. This idiom is best illustrated in the so called Ajātśatru pillar, in some of the frameless figures on the upright *toraṇa* posts and also in the panel of the Nāga king Eraptā on Prasenajita pillar. This apparent disregard for swaying rhythm and balanced co-ordination, which constitute the dominant plastic diction of the period, appears to be puzzling. It is possible that the craftsman who were responsible for these reliefs were not yet fully aware of the scope and vitality of the balanced rhythm of flowing curves or of the plastic effect that might be achieved thereby. Whatever the case the idiom plays only a small and subordinate part in the art of Bharhut. A fluid linear rhythm although sometimes flattering in ancient remains the keynote of the style of Bharhut.[136]

Bharhut represents nearly a primitive phase in classical Indian art. In spite of the relation that existed in the different forms within a composition of single figure, the main character of the stories, appear to be unaware of the parts that they are to play in the scenes and are hence without any expression. They simply exist and by mere existence they fulfil the need of the stories depicted.

It is hence; perhaps in general term the Bharhut art has been described as modest and restrained. But this modesty or restraint is not done deliberately, or consciously. In spite of this apparent drawback the stories are narrated with

exhaustive clearness, no single details pertain to the stories are left out added to these. The descriptive labels leaves no doubt about the identification of the scenes, Indeed the artists are so much engrossed with details that nothing escapes through them bit of the tattoo mark on a person, the ornamentation of a door frame, the pattern of upholstery or the fine veins of the leaf. The meticulous care with which the details are elusively worked out has almost a disturbing effect and it is only with difficulty that an impression of the whole can be obtained.

Indian art and culture have a long legacy or history and they were deeply inspired by old myths, usages, and beliefs, and religious ideas which were propounded by thinkers of various schools and sects which are clearly reflected in the art of Bharhut.

One of the remarkable aspects of early Buddhist art is that the focus was not on individuals or portraits, even the kings who were its patrons were not carved as individual. In fact, *Chitrasūtra* states that eternal themes and not personalities are the fitting subject of art.

The Buddha did not claim any divine status and it is believed to be one in a line of Buddha. The focus of the art of the early stūpas was of the ethical messages. It is this ethical message that was contained in the *Jātaka* stories carved on the *vedikā* of the stūpa.

The railings of Bharhut have the earliest known representations of the "*Jātaka*", stories of the Buddha in his previous lives, in the form of different men and as animals. One of most marvellous aspects of early Buddhist art is the portrayal of fine ethical qualities in the world of animals, often missing even in men. In the *Mahākapi Jātaka*, roundel depicts the story of the Buddha when he was born as a virtuous monkey, the "*Mahākapi Jātaka*". Many incidents of the story are shown very skilfully in a small space. The stories are told in a continuous narration in which the same figure appears several times. There is no need to separate the episodes of the story with frames, signifying it before and after.

In the 1st century BCE, India's artists, who had worked in the perishable media of brick, wood, thatch, and bamboo, adopted stone on a very large scale. Stone railings and gateways, covered with relief sculptures, were added to stūpas. Favorite themes were the events from the historic life of the Buddha, as well as from his previous lives, which were 550 in numbers are called *Jātakas* and often include popular legends adapted to Buddhist teachings.

Though, Buddha was not represented in figure in early Buddhist art, He is considered as a super human being or *bhagavān*. In the inscription at Bharhut the Buddha is designated as *bhagavat*, divine adorable *bhagavān*, even in the scene prior to his enlightenment and the expression *bhagavato ūkramti* on a pillar in the north eastern quadrant clearly refers to the descent of an *avatāra* or an incarnation of *bhagavān. (bhagavato sakamunino Bodho, Bhagavato Dhamachakam, Bhagavato Vipsino Bodhi* etc.) [137] It further creates a base for cult making ideology. The Buddha before his birth in this world was abiding in the *Tuşita* heaven. He takes birth as a human being, not on exhaustion of his *karmas* but, of his own wish, for the salvation of humankind. The *Tikotika Chakama* at Bharhut indicates that even at this early phase the Buddha was regarded as the saviour of devotees from danger.[138]

A step ahead from aniconism to iconism

It appears that a section of the ancient Buddhists commonly felt the need to have the representation of Buddha in human form at least by the 2nd century BCE onwards. An early attempt in this direction was the introduction of Buddha-*pādas* in early Buddhist art suggesting the presence of the master in human form. This feature has been sculpted at Amaravati, Bharhut, Sanchi and Pauni. The phenomenon is present even in the earliest phase of Amaravati art.

At Bharhut the presence of Buddha is represented in the episode connected with his descent from heaven at Sankisa in which a footprint is depicted at the top and the other at the lowest part of the ladder suggest his human body although invisible.

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द्युभ्राभ्राभेभयुग्मद्वयकरघृतकुम्भाद्भि रासिच्यमाना ।
रत्नौघा बद्धमौलिर्विमलतरदुकूलार्त वाले पनाढया
पद्माक्षीपद्मनाभोरसि कृतवसतिः पद्मगा श्रीःश्रियैः नः ॥

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हिमरजतनिभश्च षड्विषाणः सुचरण चारभुजः सुरत्तर्शीषः।

उदरमुपगतो गजप्रधानोललितगतिर्दृढवज्रगात्रसंधिः ॥ 156 ॥

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CHAPTER 4

Buddhist Art of Sanchi Stūpa No. I : Sculptural Assessment

Introduction

The art of Sanchi stūpa No.I is described as "the noblest of all the monuments which early Buddhism has bequeathed to India."[1] It marks a significant twist from the art style prevailing in Bharhut.

The art during the 2nd century BCE to the beginning of Christian era is characterised by vigorous and stout sculptures, carved mostly on railing pillars; which in the course of time led to the dazzling bas reliefs of Sanchi.

At Sanchi, the *toraṇas* are carved during Sātavāhana (Āndhra) period 1st BCE to early centuries of CE. *Torṇas* are erected during a short span of twenty years or a generation, as inscriptions on it clearly indicates. According to R.P. Chanda, "The votive inscriptions on the east, south and west gates of stūpa No. I indicate that, they were all erected within the same generation. The southern pillar of the west gate and the middle architrave of the south gate are the gifts evidently of the same donor, Balamitra, pupil of Aya Chuḍa. (*aya-cuḍasa atēvāsinō Balamitrasa dāna thabhō*)

The southern pillar of the east gate is the gift of the Achhāvaḍe Seḥhi Nāgapiya of Korara (or Kurara) (*Kōrarasa Nāgapiyasa Achāvaḍe seṭhisa dāna thabhō*) and the northern pillar of the west gate is the gift of the same person together with his son Sagha (*Saṁgha*), who was the resident of Kurara[2] (*Kurarāya Nāgapiyasa Achhāvaḍe seṭhisa putasa cha Saghasa dānaṁ thabhō)*.

The gateways can be dated to the half of the first century BCE based on the inscription on the southern gateway, which mentions that, it was a gift of Ānanda, who was the royal architect of King Sātakarṇi, identified as Sātakarṇi II of the Sātavāhana dynasty, who ruled during the first century BCE for fifty six years. (*rāñō siri Sātakaṇisa āvēsanisa Vāsiṭhiputrasa Ānaṁdasa dānaṁ*)[3]

The Sātavāhanas are associated chiefly with the southern part of India which we know from the literary and epigraphically sources as '*Dakṣināpatha.*'A number of inscriptions shows that the area covered by the Sātavāhana empire was not simply restricted to the upper Godavari and the Narbada valley, but on at least two occasions, including Surashtra (modern Kathiyawar), south-eastern Rajputana and Malwa.[4]

In Sātavāhana period sculptures in almost three dimensional forms were carved along with the bas-reliefs viz. bracket figures of *yakṣī* of the Sanchi stūpa No. I. In the bas-reliefs of the Sanchi the Buddha still does not appeared. The art form of Bharhut as well as of Sanchi was constantly influenced by the older tradition of wooden and ivory carvings. However, sculptures of gorgeous *yakṣīs*, the *Jātakas*, scenes from the life of the Buddha, Gaja Lakṣmī, decorative motifs, auspicious symbols, birds, mythical animals etc. forms the subject matter of the art of Sanchi. The art of Sanchi is more profuse, sophisticated and variegated than that of Bharhut. But it does not differ from that of the Bharhut; most of the artistic trends are in continuation to this period. The lively narrative scenes contained in the *Jātakas* represents a development in an elaborate manner in which similar *Jātaka* tales were carved on the railings of the Bharhut stūpa. The carving executed by Bharhut sculptor on Ajātaśatru pillar became popular and was also executed by the Sanchi sculptors more enthusiastically, at Sanchi the immobility of Bharhut gives place to a vital movement, and the compositions are more refined and realistic. This art is purely representative and realistic in appearance.

Due to their historical and artistic importance the group of monuments at Sanchi (latitude: 23° 28' north, longitude: 77° 48' east) is included in the World Heritage list of UNESCO since 1989. It is situated 9 km. south-west of Vidisha which, in pre-independence days, was known as Bhilsa (Bhilasa Tops) but, now it is known as 'Vidisha', its ancient name.

Art activity was initiated mainly from the time of Aśoka who constructed a stūpa (272-232 BCE, as is clear from the size of the bricks e.g. 40x25x7.5 cm.) and a pillar at Sanchi. The core of stūpa was built of mud and fired bricks. The excavation carried out at Sanchi by John Marshall[5] clearly revealed that the original stūpa was erected by Aśoka. It was later encased in stone by the Śuṅga and the stone terrace and the stairways, with twenty five steps each at the base, were added. The stone pavement of the procession path also belongs to the 2nd century BCE embellished with magnificence sculptured gateways during the Sātavāhana reign. The place slowly gained importance and it continued to flourish up to the CE 12th century and it was deserted in the CE 13th century. A fact about the Sanchi is worth mentioning here, that the Buddha never visited the place[6], even Buddhist literature does not make any mention about the place, except the *Mahāvaṁśa*[7] a Buddhist text from Sri Lanka which mentioned its name as 'Chetiyāgiri'. In spite of that, Sanchi developed as an important center for Buddhists probably because Aśoka's wife 'Devi' belonged to this place (Vidisha). He married to Devi when he was posted as a viceroy at Vidisha and there must have been a strong community of the adherents of Buddhism in and around Vidisha.[8]

Sanchi's name, in Aśoka's time, when the Buddhists were already established there, was Kākaṇāva or Kākanāya; later on it was known as Kākanāda-boḥa, and in the seventh century Bota-Śri-Parvata.[9] Sanchi is situated near Bhopal is a well known site of Buddhists especially for the stūpa No. I, II & III. Several stūpa in and around Sanchi has yielded relics, including those of the direct disciples of Buddha and later Buddhist teachers. Though in Sanchi stūpa No. I no relic casket has been found yet. But the relic chamber of stūpa III yielded two stone boxes inscribed with the names of Sāriputra and Mahāmogalānasā, the two foremost disciple of Buddha.[10] Surrounding areas like Sonari, Satdhara, Andher, Bhojpur are also has a rich Buddhist monuments. At Satdhara, stūpa No. II yielded a large steatite vase containing five relic caskets. Each of them inscribed with the name of the Buddhists saints whose relics were stored within.

Sanchi was discovered in 1818 by General Taylor. In 1851, Cunningham and F.C. Maisey excavated the Sanchi stūpa which was already disturbed by Captain Johnson in 1822. But Alexander Cunningham was excavating, it mainly for the relic casket of main stūpa, which is not yet reported from the site.

Previous work

The monumental work on the Sanchi stūpa was done by the Alexander Cunningham, James Fergusson and General F.C. Maisey. James Fergusson works in his book "*Tree and Serpent worship*" published in 1866 in which he extensively used the drawings made by Maisey.

Cunningham after excavating the site had written a book *"The Bhilsa Topes"*. The memorial work on the Sanchi group of monuments is Marshall and Foucher's *"The Monuments of Sanchi"* in three volumes. This work concerns mainly with the detailed description of the monuments. Some of the identifications of sculptures are not seems to be correct and authors did not describe the dress, ornaments, hairstyle, musical instruments or more precisely the cultural and aesthetic aspects of sculptures of Sanchi stūpas. Some of the reliefs at Sanchi stūpa No.I have been discussed by the Albert Grunwedel in his book *Buddhist Art in India*. Like wise the scholars like V.S. Agrawala, (*Indian Art*) Debala Mitra (*Buddhist Monuments, Sanchi*), John Marshall, (*Guide to Sanchi*) Vidya Dehejia (*Discourse in Early Indian Art*), R. P. Chanda (*Dates of the Votive Inscriptions on the Stūpas At Sanchi*) are also throw ample light on the art, and aesthetics on the Sanchi stūpa.

Built in the 3rd century BCE during Aśokan period stūpa No. I of Sanchi was erected to enshrine the relics of Buddha. Aśoka also erected a monolithic lion capital pillar to the southern side of stūpa. According to *Mahāvaṁśa*[11] traditions, he was a governor of Ujjayini before accession to the throne of Magadha. He also married to Devi daughter of a *śreṣthī* of Vidisha. She was a great follower of Buddhism. When Aśoka accessioned to the throne, he erected pillar and stūpa at Sanchi. After the construction of the Stūpa No.I, it was known as *Mahāchetiyagiri*.

The warm treatment received by the Buddhism during the time of Maurayas followed by the Śuṅga-Sātavāhanas period, which was noticed by the flourishing existence of this religion at Sanchi, Bharhut, Talapura, Pangoraria, Ujjain, Madighat and other places. After Aśoka the Buddhist community at Sanchi enlarged the stūpa by building an encircling stone wall around it to the double of its size to its present diameter of 120 feet. A stone railing was also erected around the stūpa made up of fine quality of sand stone, most likely quarried from the nearby Nagouri hills. The railing is larger than compared to the railing of Bharhut stūpa. Total height of railing is 11feet. In each quadrant there are thirty pillars. But it is a plain railing unlike the richly decorated Bharhut stūpa railing. Sand stone railing was also found at upper ambulatory path some fifteen feet above the ground level with access through a stairway at the south. The same stone was used for the parasol and *harmikā* railing at the top of the stūpa.

The great stūpa at Sanchi made up of buff sand stone queried from nearby hills, consists of a hemispherical dome with a flattened top on which rests *harmikā* supporting a *chhatra*. It stands on elevated terrace hardly a hundred meters high, with an enclosure and a *pradakṣiṇā path*, which is approached by stairways on either side of the south. The *pradakṣiṇā path* and the flights of steps having a enormous railing. Around the stūpa on the ground is *pradakṣiṇā path*. On the ground level is a massive railing consisting of *staṁbha*, *sūchī*, *uṣṇīṣa*; many were gifted by donors, who have recorded their names in the inscriptions engraved on them.

Plain railings unlike the stūpa of Bharhut and other places

Unlike the richly carved railing of Bharhut, Sanchi stūpa No.II, Bodhgaya railing; plain railings of Sanchi stūpa No. I suggest that it was erected before the construction of Bharhut stūpa and followed the tradition of plain stone railings of Aśoka's period, as found in the *harmikā* of Dharmrājika stūpa at Sarnath. It seems that previously it was built up of wood; gradually it changed to the stone railing; as pious laymen wanted to win merit for them selves by rebuilding a section of it with more costly and permanent material.

Four *Toraṇas*

The carvings at Sanchi as seen on the four *toraṇas* of stūpa No.I; are among the greatest achievement of the time. All the four *toraṇas* are alike in general structure. These richly carved *toraṇas*, where no space is left uncarved, on vertical posts, capitals and crossbars create artistic miracle on earth. It may be mentioned here that for the first time *toraṇa* is appeared in the Bharhut stūpa. Remains of only one *toraṇa* had been found from the site.

In the *Śatapatha Brāmaṇa*[12] there are references about the erection of sepulchral mounds associated with the different classes of people. It also mentions the pegs around the *śmaśāna* or funeral mound were also fixed, one in front, a *sami* one on the left, one behind *varaṇa* a *vṛitra* peg on the right. This system probably gives birth to the custom of erecting of *toraṇa* in the four directions of stūpa.

Percy Brown[13]considers that the idea of *toraṇa* originated from the bamboo fencings and the gateways made with bamboos and erected at the entrance of the Vedic villages (*grāmadvāras*) which resembled a primitive portcullis through which the cattle passed to and from the pastoral ground. The distant prototype of such a type of *toraṇa* or gateway can be traced in the *gopurams* (cow gates) in south India. The *Agni Purāṇa*, the *Mānasāra* and the *Śukranītisāra* also give descriptive accounts of the *toraṇa* which is considered an essential architectural embellishment of an ideal city.[14]

The magnificent stūpa and its four richly carved *toraṇa* are the chief objects of interest at Sanchi built by the Sātavāhana rulers during the first century BCE. The word *toraṇa dwāra* occurs in the *Jātaka* No. 404 and 537. In the south gateway of Sanchi the *toraṇa ḍwāra* of Kuśīnagara is excellently delineated.[15]

It is fine specimen of superb craftsmanship. Four richly carved *toraṇas* were erected at the four corners and made up of sandstone quarried probably from the Udayagiri hills. Each gateway consists of two square pillars crowned by a set of four lions, elephant or dwarfs, supporting a superstructure of three slightly curved architraves to reach up to the height of 28 feet. Architraves are separated from each other by four square blocks, in the corner side and three uprights or pillars in the middle portion. The uprights are carved with the honey suckle motif or *chāuri* bearers

the empty spaces are filled with elephant and horse riders carved in round. Projecting from the abacus of the capitals and supporting the ends of the lowest architraves are the most beautifully carved *śālabhañjikās*. The spaces between the ends of the architraves are also occupied by the smaller figures of *śālabhañjikā*; while on the volutes stand lions or elephants. On the top architrave are carved *dharma-chakra* flanked by *chāuri*- bearing *yakṣas* and *triratna*. On the outer side of scrolls are carved *mālādhārī kinnaras/suparaṇās*, now mutilated but traces of the same are still can be seen. (Plate 4.2)

The entire surface of the gateways is covered with bas-relief representing scenes related to the life of Buddha, with the other subsequent historical scenes and decorations. Inconsistency can be seen in the workmanship and treatment of sculptures due to the varied authorship. A clear-cut difference can be seen between the Sanchi stūpa No. I and II in formation, modus operandi and composition. Sculptures of Sanchi are more maturely developed and intricately carved. But the sculptor still suffered with the problem of tri-dimensional effect. Sculptor tried to sort out this problem by grouping and balancing of figures in such a way that they create an illusion of depth and distance.[16]

Sanchi stūpa No.I is famous due to the richly decorative and narrative carved on these architrave and pillars. It has been executed very minutely with such thorough care that it reminds us of the work executed in ivory. According to an inscription on the south gateway, it has been executed by the ivory workers of Vidisha. The inscription reads as, "*Vēdisakēhi daṁtakarēhi rupakaṁmaṁ kataṁ*".[17] A closer look at the load bearing elephants of the gateways reveals that the tusks of the elephants are missing. Probably the tusks were not made of stones, but real elephant tusks which were in abundant quantity available with the ivory carvers of Vidisha.[18] (Plate 4.1) It is interesting to mention here that the *toraṇas* were once painted in red colour as the traces of the same can be seen in several places.

The Sanchi stūpa No.I is 54 feet high and covers a circular area 120 feet in diameter. The hemispherical dome has a shortened top surrounded by a low railing *harmikā* consisting of stone shaft with umbrella. The body of the stūpa has a first layer of brick and a second casing of stone. At the ground level there is also a pathway for circumambulation and other rituals.

The art of Sanchi *toraṇa* is so fascinating that once the Emperor Napoleon III was fascinated with these gateways and he wrote to the Sikander Begum asking for one of the gates as a gift. The Government of India however, refused to remove it, and in place plaster cast was taken and were sent to Paris. There are also casts at the South Kensington Museum; London, at Dublin, Edinburgh and Berlin.[19]

Profusely carved *Toraṇas*

Toraṇas of Sanchi stūpa No.I are profusely carved; sculptor had not left a single inch of *toraṇa* unadorned. Sculptures are carved on pillars (divided in square relief), architraves; square dies, vertical cross bars, on the inner lower face of the architrave, on the thresholds of the *toraṇa*, on the outer side face of the architrave, bracket, on the inner side and above the scrolls and on the first architraves. It gives a unique view to *toraṇa*. No where in the contemporary art and even after that could be compared to any *toraṇa* with the *toraṇas* at Sanchi. Outer side of the scrolls is delineated with finely carved human faced flying bejeweled *gaṇḍharvās* holding a garland in their hands. They are depicted in the same manner as we found at Bharhut but their wings are more western type as it can be clearly seen. (Plate 4.2)

Western Influence on the art and architecture of Sanchi

India had been sharing its cultural as well as political and economical interactions from the other civilizations like Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt. Contacts between these countries remain unaffected due to one reason or the other. A close examination of the art patterns and motifs in architecture and artifacts of these regions pointed towards the dissemination of motifs.

Very ancient design of stepped Merlon (Battlement motif) finds continuity from Ur where it occurs on a fort wall and at Mohenjo-Daro. It figures prominently on Bharhut copings alternating with the blue lotus.[20] At Sanchi it occurred on the pillar capitals of *toraṇa*. The Hellenistic and western Asiatic art affected the early Indian school during the Andhra period even more intimately than it has done during the Śuṅga period. In the second century BCE the Greeks of Bactria invaded India and for a while they reached up to the capital of Magadha. They settled in Punjab till the arrival of the new invaders, the Iranians of this

time, viz. the Śakas and the Parthians. At the same time about 130 BCE the nomads of 'High Asia', driven towards the west by a violent whirlpool of events occurring at the Chinese borderland, came into clash with the Parthians and established themselves in Bactriana. In successive waves they drove towards India. They simultaneously adopted Indian culture and the Buddhist religion. In the meantime around 50 BCE. Hippalus discovered the Monsoon (Westerly wind).[21] Under all these circumstances art of West and art of India also got influenced with each other. Due to this impact double animal pillar top of West Asian derivation became popular in Post-Mauryan period.

Scythian art penetrated India with the invasions of Śakas in 150 BCE. Parthians in 250 BCE and the Ta-Yueh-chi known as Indo-Scythians or Kuṣāṇas in CE 40.[22] The Scythian artists were fond of animals they saw or imagined and their art is essentially an animal art. Individual animals as well as animals in combat scenes are shown in diverse and contrasting positions. They evoke a fabulous animal kingdom in various activities, and in zoomorphic junctures. On the pillar of west gate of Sanchi stūpa No.I is a motif of two winged lion charging in the opposite direction with a man in the middle holding the reigns. It is the earliest winged lion motif with curved beak, the round eyes, and fish scale wings and the scalloped lines marking the muscles of the legs, it is a clear impact of Scythian art. The winged-beings is a trend borrowed from the Assyrian art. From the sculptures of Sanchi stūpa No.I the influence of Scythian art can be seen in the animal motifs. Even the rosette motif was also a favourite motif of Scythians. From the princely burial at Maiko a diadem of felt mounted with gold rosette was found. In Sanchi the rosette motifs were used for architectural decorations in Indianised form, emerging from lotus.

For example Sphinx in ivory is found from the tomb at Sparta, in Attica. (Human face, lion body with wings) and may be the ivory worker of Ujjain would have acquainted with the art of ivory of ancient Greek and applied to it at Sanchi.[23]

The relief of the harpy-tomb, now in British museum surmounted a high square column, and apparently served to enclose a tomb, an opening into which is left in one of the sides. This relief has a depiction of flying celestial being which have a face of a woman.[24] In the same manner flying celestial beings are found at Sanchi worshiping stūpa on the either side of it. On the eastern gateway, two figures are represented riding on horned lions. One of the riders shows foreign features like curly hairs, ribbon around the head, bunch of grapes in one hand, probably belongs to the west region.

According to Albert Grunwedel,[25] "The whole series of these figures those mounted on goats, on dromedaries, on lions- present a distinct contrast to the Hindus riding on elephants. The mythical-geographical conceptions on which they are based remind one of those fabulous creatures of which Herodotus tells the Greeks, from Persian traditions related by Aristeas of Prokonnesos, and which, on the strength of Indian tales, Megasthenes described at a later date." The different people that lived in or out side the ancient Indian boundaries were distinguished from one another, by their drapery, facial features, headdress and ornaments found in the place in the art of Sanchi stūpa.

The Indian sculptors have not only given expressive expression to their belief to the art of Sanchi, but has also shown how Indian sculptors transforms foreign influence, yet does not lose its own soul, Indian art remained a national art.[26]

At Sanchi a bas-relief shows two stages of the transformation of the lion into a goat, here lion wears stag's horn fastened on with straps. The stag is sacred animal of the Scythians; it symbolizes the sun in the form of a flying deer. We observe that these lion stags of Sanchi are also flying animals, since they are equipped with a pair of wings.[27]

As regard to the twin animal motif it is found at the earliest date at Ur, Warka on the lower Euphrates, Tell Halaf in the upper Euphrates, Mycenae and later in India at Bharhut, Sanchi, Amaravati and Western Caves. At Sanchi the flanking animals are twins in each case of goats, horses, camels, leogriff, stags, lions, elephants, and bulls and peacock. According to V.R. Talvalkar "Foreign invasion in western India after Alexander must have caused an influx of Iranaian and Scythians some of them might have been admitted to Buddhism. These Parthio Scythians or Iranians, such as Parni or Aparni, Sakarauli or Pasiani etc. with their homelands between Zagros Armenian massif and Hindukush Mountains, as well as Hyreania entered India, from time to time in pre-Christian days (before CE 1st century). This may explain winged lions engraved on the pillars of the

eastern gate of Sanchi stūpa."[28] It shows that the Hellenistic and western Asiatic art affected the early Indian school of art during the Andhra period even more intimately than it has during the Śuṅga period. **(Plate 4.3)**

Continuation of the depiction of Gaja Lakṣmī

Only one divinity appears here and is fully developed one; it is the popular Hindu divinity Gaja Lakṣmī. There is several relief of Gaja Lakṣmī in the stūpa No.I at Sanchi. These figures mostly occur on the square sections, between the three architraves appearing over each of the main stems of the two pillars of the *toraṇa*. She is depicted sitting or standing on full blown lotus venerated by two elephants. She is some times depicted in a very archaic form as if, they are made by wooden carvers and some times she is very sophistically carved, as if they are carved by ivory carvers. Even flowing water poured by the Gajas on the head of Gaja Lakṣmī is also carved in one relief.

Marshall has identified her as Māyā. Her anatomical depiction is more proportioned and fine than Bharhut. She is shown sitting on full blown lotus and holding lotus with stalks in her one hand and two elephant are venerating her and pouring water from jar with the help of their trunk. In one place a very interesting depiction of Gaja Lakṣmī as Māyā can be seen. Here the deity is standing on lotus holding a lotus stalk in one hand and as usual, two elephants are pouring water from a jar held in their trunk. Interestingly a *chhatra* is seen above her head. This indicate us that sculptor is trying to depict here Māyā Devī and *chhatra* is the indexical sign for newly born baby i.e. Bodhisattva.

Aśvaghoṣa[29] while describing the incident of the birth of Buddha narrates, "Two streams of water bursting from heaven, as bright as the moon's rays, having the power of heat and cold, fell upon that peerless one's head to give refreshment to his body". The depiction does not match with the description given in the book. But the *chhatra* placed above the head of Gaja Lakṣmī suggest that sculptor wants here to depict Māyā Devī but not Gaja Lakṣmī.

Early western writers like M. Foucher, John Marshall, Zimmer interpret her as Māyā Devī. So in this case also it may be said that early Buddhism adopted the older symbols to its immediate purposes.[30] A. K. Coomaraswamy elaborately discussed this matter in his book *Elements of Buddhist Iconography* and writes that, "The Gaja Lakṣmī symbolism too belongs to this category. Śrī-Lakṣmī of the *Brāhmaṇa-Upaniṣad* period is gladden by elephants.....bathed by elephant kings, with golden vessels."[31] **(Plate 4.4)**

Trees of previous Buddhas

The Pali *Mahāpadāna-Sutta* and the *Buddhavaṁśa* a book of poems belonging to the *Khuddaka-Nikāya*[32] presented details of six previous Buddhas. *Mahāvastu* and *Lalitavistara* supplied, respectively, a list of more then one hundred Buddhas. The names of last six Buddha are same in both Pali and Sanskrit text. They were Vipaścit, Śikhī, Viśvabhṛt, Kukuḥsandha, Kāśyapa, Koṇāgamana.

In the text *Divyāvadāna* Buddha Vipaścit is mentioned as, "*Vipaśyino Bhagavata*". Another text *Mahāvastu* says, *Vipaśyine....Buddhāya*, and in *Divyāvadāna* he is mentioned as Vipaśyino Bhagavata.[33]

Likewise the name of Buddha Sikhi occurs in the texts like *Dīghanikāya II* (*Sikhī bhagavā Puṇḍarikassa mule abhisambuddho, Jātaka Nidāna Kathā*, (*Sikhissa bhagavato Puṇḍarīka-rukkho Bodhi*) and *Divyāvadāna.*(*Śikhino bhagavato*). [34]

Viśvabhṛt Buddha is mentioned in the same texts as *Vessabhū bhagavā Sālassa mule abhisambuddho* (*Dīgha Nikāya* II), *Vessabhussa bhagavato Sāla-rukkho Bodhi* (*Jātaka-Nidāna-Kathā*), *Viśvabhuvaḥ bhagavato (Divyāvadāna).*[35]

Kukuḥsandha Buddha mentioned in *Dīgha Nikāya* (*Kakusandho bhagavā Sirīsassa mule abhisambuddho*), *Jātaka Nidāna kathā* (*Kakusandhassa bhagavato mahā-Sirīsa-rukkho Bodhi*), *Divyāvadāna (Krakucchandasya bhagavato)* and *Mahāvastu (Bhagavato Krakucchandasya and Krakutsaṃdāya buddāya).* [36]

Kāśyapa Buddha is mentioned in the texts like *Dīgha Nikāya* (*Kassapo bhagavā Nigrodhassa mule abhisambuddho), Jātaka Nidāna kathā (Kassapassa bhagavato Nigrodha-rukkho Bodhi), Divyāvadāna (Kāśyapasya bhagavato)* and *Mahāvastu (Bhagavato Kāśyapasya..)* [37]

Buddha Koṇāgamana also mentioned in the *Dīgha Nikāya, Jātaka Nidāna kathā, Divyāvadāna* (respectively as, *Koṇāgamanasa bhagavā Udumbarassa mule abhisambuddho, Koṇāgamanassa bhagavato Udumbara-*

rukkho Bodhi, Kanakamuneḥ bhagavato.., Bhagavato Kanakamunisya.., Konākamuni.., Budhasa Konākamanasa)[38]

In Bharhut they are labeled as *Bhagavato Vipasino Bodhi, Bhagavato Bodhi Sālo, Bhagavato Kakusadhasa Bodhi, Bhagavato Konāgamanasa Bodhi, Bhagavato Sākamunino Bodho, Bhagavato Kasapasa Bodhi.* The label attached to the Buddha Śikhī perhaps lost. [39]

There is depiction of trees of seven previous Buddha, duly labeled at Bharhut. The earliest reference comes from the Nigaliva pillar edict of Aśoka. Since, the time of carving of Bharhut stūpa, the concept of seven previous Buddha's were popular and at Sanchi, trees of previous Buddha's are depicted more elegantly with their stūpas. The names of trees carved at Sanchi are *Pāṭali, Puṇḍrīka, Aśvattha, Nyagrodha, Śāla, Śirīṣā* and *Uḍumbara.* Here at Sanchi stūpa No. I, there are two types of depiction first, in an archaic manner and second, sophistically carved. In the first type the trees are with stūpa, and they are not elaborately carved. In the second type trees are depicted without stūpa and trees are very majestically carved. **(Plate 4.5)**

Rich depiction of ornamentation drapery and hairdo

The art of Sanchi stūpa No. I is full of depiction of ornaments, jewelleries and different kind of draperies like as we found at Bharhut. Each and every figure whether it is of man, women, divinities, semi divine beings, animals, dwarf all are bejeweled. The dress of the men consists of *dhotī*, some times *uttarīya* and for women it is light and transparent clothing i.e. *dhotī* upper part of the body is always uncovered. Men usually wore necklace, bangles, big sized ear ornaments and one or two knotted head dress or *uṣṇīṣa.* The royal personages or divine being some time wore a big horizontally elongated *uṣṇīṣa* or turban which was perhaps the sign of royalty or divinity. This type of elaborate hairdo is noticed for the first time at Sanchi stūpa No. II where a man is depicted sitting on stool made of bamboo, holding a cup in one hand and lotus stalk in another hand.

At Bharhut, *yakṣīs* wears very fabulous, gorgeous and stylish hairdo, mostly one hair style was popular i.e., parting (*sīmanī*) the hair in two parts and style of one or two plaits, and a very ornamented cross band covers almost 2/3 part of the head. *Yakṣī* of Bharhut even decorated their hair by doing hair beading; this tradition is still can be seen at "Delhi Haat"; New Delhi, where the folk ladies make hair beading for their customers with the help of colourful threads and beads.

Bharhut sculptures characterise the most striking style of hairdo. They even decorated their hairs with fresh flowers and leaves. Use of Kohl is also evident from the Bharhut sculptures. Patatjali had describe it as *aṅkta* for kohl eyes.[40]

Piercing tattoos on the face was also common in the contemporary society. In the *Kṣudravastu Skandha, (Chullavagga)* several ornaments like, earring, pendent, waist band (*Katisūtra*), ornaments for feet, arm band, (*aṅgada)* ornaments for hands (*hastābharaṇa*), finger rings are described in connection with the rule that they should not wear by a *bhikṣunī.* Further the text also mentions the scrubs for face (*mukha lepa*), face massage, decoration of face with the help of a kind of paste (*mensal chūrṇa*) scrub for body, kohl (*ānjana*), bathing with scented water, waist band made up of cloth; leather and bamboo.[41]

Unlike the ornamented and profusely decorated hairdo (*Kaiśika*) of Bharhut, at Sanchi we find various types of simple hairdo. In the sculptures of Sanchi the women either plait their hair or styled it in double plaits and above are either gold chains, strings of pearls or garland of flowers coming from their forehead and hanging at their back. In one place (Southern Gateway) Gaja Lakṣmī wears conical knot leaning toward right. In some places royal ladies, styled their loose hair falling on shoulders fastened with a ribbon around the fore head and making a kind of flowered knot, certain women wear looped and knotted hair at the back, and some time the loose hair is fastened together by an ornament. Village ladies are shown with simple knotted hair at their back. Females are seen with conical hair style tied with a piece of cloth, most probably light cloth such as silk or fine quality cotton cloth, making a cross over her forehead. This hair-do has been called by Aśvaghoṣa as *śuklāniśuka-aṭṭālaka.*[42]

Generally, women covered their head with decorated cloth. The men generally styled their hair in top-knots and are clean-shaven.[43] Ascetics are seen with knotted *jatās* over their head.

Rich ornamentation worn by wealthy peoples is also mentioned in the text like *Dhammapada.* Coomaraswamy[44]

quotes an interesting passage of the *Dhammapada* in his book *The Arts & Crafts of India & Ceylon*, describing the "great creeper parure," an ornament, made by 500 gold smiths in four months, and worn by the daughter of a king's treasurer. This ornament was extended from head to foot. It was made up of gold, coral, gems and silver and it was worth ninety millions (copper coins) and a hundred thousands were spent on the workmanship." Further he quotes Pāṇini's grammar, in which mentioned many names of ornaments as mentioned by Pāṇini are still in use for example, *mohan mālā and Karṇa phūl* etc.

The ear ornaments depicted in the sculptures of Sanchi does not differ very much from Bharhut. M. Postel in his book "*Ear Ornaments of Ancient India*" mentions that during the period of Śuṅga-Sātavāhan, variety and amount of jewellery found on deities was at its peak. The goddesses are decorated with large hair pins ending in symbolic designs at the back of their huge buns of hair (*dhammillas*), with flowered hair clasps, pendants, (*lalāṭikās*) on the higher forehead, heavy studs, convex, concave or cylindrical earrings, decked with flower designs and tassels, with necklaces, pendants, with several types of bangles on their forearms, with decorative belts (*mekhalās*), pendants on their skirts, etc.[45]

Men are depicted wearing big square ear ornaments, mostly one stringed necklace, anklets, bangles, girdle and armlets. Their head dresses are also very elaborate. Some times they wore ornamented head dress, plaited hairs. The ornaments are uncommonly rich and tastefully arranged. Aśvaghoṣa in his book "*Buddha Charita*[46] describes in one instance about the rich ornamentations and mentions that "when the prince was going out for excursion women quickly rushed towards the terrace to watch him, "frightening the flocks of birds which lived in the houses, with the noise of their girdles and the jingling of their anklets which resounded on the staircases and roofs of the mansions, and mutually reproach in one another for their hurry."

Some of the artifacts unearthed from the excavations at Sisupalgarh, Vaiśālī, Atranjikhera, Taxila and Nasik were made up of semi precious stone, terracotta, a few in ivory banded & plain or bone. The stone used include, agate, carnelian, jasper (black, red, yellow), rock crystal, chert, steatite and others, some are found decorated ranging from simple lines to elaborate patterns. The main shapes which are found during excavations are ear plugs (discs or spools), pulley or channel-shaped ear ornaments and crescent shaped ear ornaments. In Sanskrit literature they are known as *tāṭaṁka*, always described as circular in shape heavy in weight and inserted in between the lobs.[47]

To enlarge the lobs *Ketakī* flowers strip was used for this purpose. It was known as *patra kuṇḍala* .[48] Pulley or channel shaped ear ornament with disc face and conical shaped ends; some times flat channel in the middle like a pulley, some of them resemble gamesmen with a cylindrical stalk and perforation at centre.[49] **(Plate 4.6)**

Depiction of Auspicious motifs

There are many auspicious motifs depicted on the stūpa of Sanchi such as, *purṇa ghaṭa, triratna* with *śrīvatsa,* (*triratna* symbol on flag pole) *chakra,* and lotus like Bharhut stūpa. But strikingly Swastika motif, primitive tree within railing is totally absent. New auspicious motifs like *aṣṭa maṅgalaka-mālā* which included *mina mithuna, deva vimāna gūha, śrīvatsa, vardhamāna, triratna, puṣpadāma,* Indra *yaṣṭi* or *vaijayantī* and *pūrṇaghaṭa* appeared.[50] **(Plate 4.7)**

Scrolled ends of the architraves

Each *toraṇa* consists of two upright pillars that are square in shape and support a super structure of three architraves with volute ends. Like rolled-up picture scrolls, these volutes seem to unfurl the Buddhist subjects pictured in the architrave reliefs. It is worth to note that the Bharhut architraves have wide open mouths *makara* symbolizing auspiciousness and the primal life source with coiled tails. This shows the changing patterns adopted by the sculptor.

Scroll ends architraves came into practice from the erection of stūpa No. III *toraṇa* where the *nāga's* tail making the small scroll of simple four rounds whereas scrolls from the Stūpa No. I are emerging from the lotus stems and making eight rounds. This scroll pattern is also seen carved on the marble relief from Samothrace may be assigned to after 7th century BCE.[51]

Though in Sanchi, stūpa *toraṇas* with one architraves two architraves, making a curl at the end has been depicted. At Sanchi stūpa No. III the scroll has fewer roundels in comparison with the Sanchi stūpa. This shows some kind of development process of scroll which can be seen in

Sanchi stūpa No.I. In spite of this, motif shows western influence in Indian art. **(Plate 4.8)**

Three-dimensional sculptures

The sculptures carved on the architraves at Sanchi stūpa No.I is perhaps the earliest example of Indian sculptures. The portion between the upright pillars and the architraves are capitals in each *toraṇa* carved with elephants on both the north and east *toraṇa*; dwarfs or *Kumbhaṇḍas* on the west *toraṇa* and adores lions probably inspired by the Aśokan pillar set up by the Aśoka is in the south direction of stūpa near the south *toraṇa*. These figures are carved with perfect ease. Dwarfs or *Kumbhaṇḍas* on the west *toraṇa* suggests that the tradition of Pitalkhora load bearing *yakṣa*, which is very sophistically carved wearing Bharhut type armlets and wearing Meharuli *yakṣī* type anthropomorphic beaded necklace,[52] smiling face like one at Sanchi stūpa No.I *yakṣa* carved in the capital of Sanchi stūpa No.III is though elaborately bejeweled with bulging belly. **(Plate 4.9)**

Depiction of *Śālabhañjikās* :

Śālabhañjikās was originally a form of *Udyāna krīdā* i.e. a pastime garden play of ladies. The *Jātaka* literature bears clear testimony of the custom of *Udyāna krīdā* among the ladies of the cities of north-east India. In this game the ladies used to bend the branches of *śāla* trees, pluck its flowers and throw it on each other for amusement. The sculptures have depicted this game of ladies in Mathura and Amaravati art of the Śuṅga-Sātavāhana period. The Buddhist text *Lalitavistara* refers to Māhāmāyā's *śālavana Krīdā* and the miraculous birth of Siddhartha. The *śāla* tree under which Buddha was born was considered by Buddhists as a sacred symbol and an object of great veneration. The earliest known *śāla krīdā* and nativity scenes have been represented in Indian art. On a stone slab from Kauśāmbi, is shown Māyā Devī standing under a *śāla* tree. She is holding the branch of the tree by her right hand and a lady with folded hands stands on her right. In Sanchi there are depictions of *Śālabhañjikās* but not in the form of Māyā Devī, popularly known as nativity scene.

Her right arm is round the stem, while her left hand has clasped a bough. One of the *Śālabhañjikās* is so stunningly depicted that no female sculpture of that time can be compared to this one. This *Śālabhañjikās* whose stylized grace, heavy breast, small waist, girdle and the *tribhṅga* posture, are so unified and toned down that she is not merely a piece of stone sculpture, but a most beautiful women model of that period.[53] Her hairdo is entirely different from other *Śālabhañjikās*. Her hair is freely falling on her shoulders and some hairs are straight and make a fan like shape on the middle portion of the head called *śekharakas* is known as *gaṅdhamukuṭa* in the *Mahāvastu*.[54] Her diaphanous cloths are making her more attractive. The exaggerated female figures and the fondness for the nude are seen on the Sānchi reliefs. Her bareness shows the broad minded thinking of the sculptor and also their freedom to carve such a figure in a religious place i.e. stūpa.

Śālabhañjikā is standing in a very elegant posture. Her one beaded string necklace is enough to enhance her beauty. She wears a small ear ornament and a number of anklets and bangles. This extreme creation by the sculptor of Sanchi is unique and unparallel to any sculpture created by any artist of contemporary period. Six bracket figures in the northern gateway below each one of the three architraves on either side are shown in varied postures and in association with trees. Aśvaghosha[55] in his book "*Buddha-Charita* describes that when the prince was going out for excursion women quickly rushed towards the terrace, some of these women, even in their haste as they rushed longing to see, were delayed due to their heavy weight hip and bosoms." Sculptor, probably chose this kind of beautiful and youthful women as their models for carving *Śālabhañjikā* figures as described by the Aśvaghoṣa in *Buddha Charita*, he compares lovely damsels who bend over window sills to peep into the street to watch a bridal procession to the damsel gracefully flexed under the flower laden *sāla* tree, "*avalambya gavakshaparsvam anya rachita torana salabhanjikeva.*" The term for the motif, *toraṇa-Śālabhañjikā* gateway with the *sāla* tree maiden, is extremely significant.

In *Lalitavistara* a long description is given to describe the beauty of Māras daughters which resembles the beauty of *Śālabhañjikās*. In the episode of defeat of Māra, are narrated the Thirty two types of feminine magic employed by the Māra's daughters on the meditating Buddha. It is mentioned in the *Lalitavistara*[56] that, "These divine maiden are well-ornamented, dressed and adorned with soft hair, scented and perfumed, faces illuminated with crowns and earrings, with beautiful foreheads and well anointed faces, beautiful and large eyes as pure as lotus faces like the full

moon, lips like the ripe *bimba*, beautiful white teeth like conch shells, *kunḍa* flowers or snow,.....with firm, rounded breasts jutting out, the waist beautiful with three times, wide and beautiful hips,.....with thighs like the elephants trunks, constantly bearing bangles, buttocks adorned with waistband,...with slow gaits like swan, with beautiful and sweet loving speech, so well- adorned, well-versed in divine amours,...well versed in song, music and dance, beautiful and borne for love." These divine maidens are amorous, passionate with extraneous beauty made for love and send to shake the *āsana* of Bodhisattva. Sculptor of the Sanchi is very keen to depict every moment of victory over Māra that's why he has depicted him three times. It seems that the artists were inspired by the beauty of Māra's daughter, depicted nude, well figured with attractive hairdo, with less jewellery but delineated every detail of feminine beauty, with elegant posture, i.e. Holding a branch of a tree (It was a popular posture in those times as Māya has also been carved while giving birth to Bodhisattva holding a branch of *śāla* tree). **(Plate 4.10)**

Non iconic depiction of Buddha

Buddha did not believe in gods or worship, in the *Saundarānanda Kāvya* of Aśvaghoṣa we find Buddha discouraging his half-brother Nanda to touch his feet in token of worship. He told Nanda that he would be least pleased by Nanda taking the dust of his feet, but he would bless him if he would follow the precept of true *Saddharma*. Buddha was defied in Mahāyāna which considered him to be *lokottara* or superhuman.[57] This was the reason that Buddha images are not met with in Buddhist art of Sanchi. Though the symbols like *bodhi* tree, his head dress, foot prints, empty seat with *chhatra* over it duly depicted earlier in the Buddhist art of Bharhut.

Jātaka stories as depicted on the gateways of Sanchi stūpa

Vidya Dehejia describes the mode of narration used by the sculptor in early Indian art in her book, "*Discourse In Early Buddhist Art*". She had used the terms monoscenic narrative, continuous narrative, vertical continuous narrative, static monoscenic narrative, diachronic mode, synoptic narrative, sequential narrative, conflated narratives etc. Here it may be mentioned that the in early Buddhist art at Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Pauni, Kauśāmbī, Sanchi stūpa No. II. Sculptors had widely used the monoscenic or monoscenic static mode where as at Sanchi stūpa No. I sculptors gave more emphasis to continuous modes of narration. The subject had been depicted in elaborate manner. (This is as per the terminology used by Vidya Dehejia.) Main factors which had affected the sculptors to carve the themes in different modes of narration are:

1. Provided space.
2. Popularity of theme/subject to be carved.
3. Amount of donation given by the donor.

Mainly two types of trends were followed by the sculptors to depict *Jātaka* stories at Sanchi.

1. Descriptive or continuous mode of narration in a larger space on the *toraṇa*, sculptors also carved various part of story as and where he found suitable space such as Vessantara *Jātaka* and Chhaddanta *jātaka*.
2. Synoptic mode of narration in a single square relief i.e. in one and the same relief-composition, various incidents of one story may be depicted with the main figure repeatedly shown for example, Mahākapi *jātaka*, and syāma *jātaka* etc.

There are five *jātaka* stories depicted on the *toraṇa* at Sanchi stūpa. They are *Chhaddanta*, Mahākapi,[58] Vessantara, Alambusā and Śyāma *Jātaka*.

Chhaddanta *Jātaka* [59]

This *Jātaka* forms the subject matter of three architraves: southern gateway, rear face, middle architrave; western gateway, front face, bottom architrave; and northern gateway, rear face, top architrave.

It was one of the favourite subjects among the *Jātakas* with the sculptors/artists, as it had been beautifully represented at Bharhut, Amaravati, Ajanta, Goli and Sanchi with great zeal. Unlike at Bharhut representation which is monoscenic mode in narration at Sanchi *Chhaddanta jātaka* is carved in continuous narrative mode. Figures of the Bodhisattva[60] are repeated several times according to the need of the story.

The story moves like this. Once Bodhisattva was born as an elephant king with six tusked, living near Chhaddanta

lake by the Himalayan range, had two queens Chullasubhaddā and Mahāsubhadda, owing to his special love for Mahāsubhaddā, his other wife was jealous of him, therefore she had desire to become queen of Banaras. On the fulfillment of her desire she ordered Sonuttara, the best hunter of the kingdom to kill the elephant king. *Chhaddanta*, though, wounded by the shaft of the hunter, was allowed to cut off his tusks. The queen however died out of remorse at the sight of the tusks.

This story has been well illustrated on the middle architrave of the southern gateway, on lowest architrave of the western gateway and on the upper architrave of the northern gateway of the stūpa. The hunter had not been shown on the western gateway. On the southern gateway Bodhisattva has been variously depicted. Once he is seen in the lotus pond, and than near the *bodhi* tree. Every time he is surrounded with his fellow elephants. One elephant attendant keeps the *chhatra* and holds *chamara* (fly whisk) above the head of the elephant king this *chhatra* marks the royalty. Here the hunter is also seen, who has hidden himself among the rocks and making his bow ready. The sculptors chose a story, must be very popular at that time, used quite a large space to depict the story. Overall depiction is very impressive. Vegetation, rocky terrene, elephants are carved in a very natural form. At Bharhut the depiction is very simple and limited to only the depiction of *Chhaddanta*; the elephant and the hunter holding saw in his one hand. **(Plate 4.11)**

Vessantara *Jātaka*

This *Jātaka* is depicted in great details on the front and rear face of the bottom architraves of the north gateway. The story starts on the right side of the central section of the front face, which depicts the prince on elephant back behind him is battlemented rampart. At Sanchi this *Jātaka* story is depicted in expanded mode of continuous narration. Here the various episode of the Vessantara *Jātaka* occupied the space of some 22 feet in length and 2 feet wide,[61] unlike the Bharhut sculptors, who depicted only one episode of story that too in a very small space on the coping stone. It is a touching story of a generous hearted prince Vessantara, who gave away his entire as asked for.

This *jātaka* tale runs like this; Ones Bodhisattva was born as prince Vessantara his charitable activities earned him a great fame. Once he was banished from the Sibi kingdom to mount Vaṅka as a punishment because he gave his miraculous elephant endowed with the power of rain fall to Brāmṇas of the drought-stricken kingdom of Kaliṅga. Vessantara left his city with his wife Maddī, son and daughter in a gorgeous chariot drawn by four horses. He sacrificed in charity all of his belongings including horse, chariot, children and even his wife, but on intervention of the God Śakra, his family was restored to him.

This *jātaka* is carved with rich decorative and picturesque details. On the middle architrave of the northern gateway the story has been beautifully depicted

1. Prince Vessantara donates the elephant and as a punishment he left the royal palace, bidding farewell to his parents.
2. He is going on a chariot with his family.
3. Prince pouring water on the hand of the brāhmaṇas for donating his chariot meanwhile princess holding rest log of chariot on her shoulders.
4. Donation of four horses to two brāhmaṇas.
5. Family reached to the forest, the trees, animals are beautifully depicted, on the reverse side of the same architrave, the story continues.
6. The prince has been depicted approaching to the mount Vaṅku and family living in a hut. Both prince and his wife are performing *yajna.*
7. Children are playing and feeding eatables (grass or leafs) to deer.
8. Prince is sitting in a yogic posture wearing *yogapaṭṭa* with his wife in front of their hut.
9. Two lions came in to the way of her wife when she went for collecting the fruits from the *jungle*, she is carrying a bamboo basket on her head and meanwhile prince is donating his children.
10. Later on he also gave his queen in charity.
11. Then Śakra appear wearing a decorated crown holding *vajra* and a pot in his hands. Recognises his spirit of charity and reunites the prince with his queen and children.

12. Children are seen inside the palace standing in front of king who rescued the children by paying ransom to the brāhmaṇa Jūjaka. City gateway and the wild life have been carved gracefully, depicted in these panels. The story is carved in continuous mode of narration, each and every important episodes of the story is very well carved here. **(Plate 4.12)**

Śyāma *Jātaka* [62]

As mentioned earlier, this *jātaka* is seen in oldest painting of cave No.10 dated circa 2nd century BCE at Ajanta. The top panel on the inner face of the left pillar of the western gateway, the story of Śyāma *jātaka* is quite similar to Śravaṇkumār. It was first identified by S. Beal.[63] According to the story Bodhisattva once borne as Suvarṇsāma was the only son, who supported his aged blind parents. He was shot by the king of Banaras while, he was fetching water from the river for his old and blind parents. Here too, the presence of Śakra makes a special appearance and not only Śyāma is cured, but his parents are also gifted with their eyesight by him. In the above, panel the old and blind parents are seen sitting in front of the huts and below, Śyāma is seen coming to fetch water. The king of Banaras is once seen shooting an arrow on Śyāma then he is depicted standing with his bow. In a corner above the parents, Śyāma, the king and Śakra are again seen. Here sculptor very skillfully narrated as many as three episodes of the story and used synoptic mode of narration like the Bharhut sculptors who very frequently used this mode of depiction.

1. Śyāma is coming towards the river for fetching water for his parents.
2. Parents are sitting in front of their hut.
3. He is filling the jar and the king is shooting an arrow on him. After that he realises his mistake.
4. Śakra and his parents, can be seen on the upper part of the relief.

Indra or Śakra is seen here wearing elaborate crown and holding *kalaśa* (*Amūta ghaṭa*) with his one assistant standing behind him. **(Plate 4.13)**

Mahākapi *Jātaka*

Top panel of the front face of the right pillar of western gateway shows the Mahākapi *jātaka*. The sculptor has carved multiple episodes from the tale within a single square frame. But they did not care for the sequence and time span during carving. Main hero of the tale has been repeatedly illustrated. According to the tale, once Bodhisattva was a monkey ruling over 80000 monkeys living on the bank of the river Ganga and eating the sweet mangoes of a tree on the bank. Brahmadatta the king of Banaras also wanted to have the delicious fruits of that tree therefore he planned to kill the monkey king. One day the king of Banaras surrounded the tree with his army. The monkey king was anxious to save his brethren. Luckily, he found another tree on the other bank of the river and whose branches were touching the branches of the mango tree.

The monkey king jumped and hanged himself in between both the tree and thus made a bridge of his body. All his followers crossed the river through his body. Devadatta, the cousin of Buddha who was also a monkey owing to his jealous feeling jumped with force over the body of his king and broke his heart. The king of Banaras, who was witnessing the safety work of the monkey king was moved with pity and he gave the royal honour to the dying monkey.

The river Ganga is seen flowing, trees on its banks is more clearly depicted then Bharhut with many aquatic animals like tortoise and fishes etc. according to the story the sequence goes like this:

1. The king of Banaras is standing with a group of his soldiers holding sword and bow.
2. One of his soldiers is aiming at the monkey king as shown on the upper part of the panel.
3. Monkey king in his one hand holds a branch of tree but another side he is shown holding a rocky surface with the help of rope tied on one of his leg. On one side, group of saved monkeys are seen trying to hide themselves from the soldiers standing other side. A waterfall is falling in the river. The other side of the river is rocky; few trees and deer are also depicted other side.
4. Beside them, two soldiers are stretching a net for the safety of injured monkey king.
5. The king wears a big stylish turban, is listening to the dying monkey. Some people standing, holding some instruments like small drums and flute beside

the river perhaps got surprised to see the generosity and kindness of the monkey king.

All the episodes of the tale are very clearly and skillfully conveyed without any confusion. At Bharhut this tale is depicted in a medallion whereas at Sanchi it is depicted in square relief. At Bharhut the depiction of tale is very simple and archaic, total three persons are seen and only three episodes of tale are depicted whereas, at Sanchi five episodes of tale are depicted in a very advanced and skilled manner. The narration of the story is in synoptic mode. **(Plate 4.14)**

Alambusā *Jātaka*

This *Jātaka* is depicted at the right end of the front face of the lowest architrave of the northern gateway. The story pertains to an ascetic with whom a doe fell in love. She gave birth to a male child who had a horn and hence known as *Ekaśringa*. The child also became a great saint like his father and even threatened the Śakra, who sent a nymph Alambusā to corrupt him. Although she was successful in her mission yet she could not hide her identity for more than three years, and she was sent back to heaven by saint. In the beginning the newly born, one horned child is seen bathing in a lotus pond with his mother standing by the side. Than the young *Ekaśringa* is seen receiving education from his father. Here hermitage of Kassapa, his son and doe are beautifully depicted. *Ekaśringa* is shown twice, one with clasped hands in a lotus pool and second time in front of the hermit. The tale is depicted in synoptic mode of narration.[64]

Sanchi verses Ajanta

Some mural painting of 2nd century BCE in one of the earliest *chaitya-gṛhas* at Ajanta can be compared in style and subject with that of the sculptures of Sanchi *toraṇas*. Ajanta caves and other rock-cut sites in western India lay along trade routes and with the donations given by these rich and devoted merchant these caves were decorated and painted. In cave No. XII an inscription states that it was the gift of a merchant named "Ghanamadada". One of the subjects shows a prince with *chhatra* held over his head by an attendant proceeding with his retinue of musicians for worshiping *bodhi* tree. In continuation of these painted scenes there are mutilated remains of paintings where a *toraṇa* entrance like the one at Sanchi, the *toraṇa* being that of the city of Kuśīnagara and the scene is related to the transport of the relics of Buddha after his *mahāparinirvāṇa* at Kuśīnagara. On the right-side wall are remains of *Chhaddanta* and Śyāma *Jātakas*.The coiffures and the cloths worn by the figures depicted in these paintings are very similar to those occurred in the sculptures of Sanchi. [65] **(Plate 4.15)**

Depiction of *Trayastriṁśa* heavens

In the early Buddhist text there is lot of description of thirty three gods of the Hindus who were the residents of the *Trayastriṁśa* Heavens. It was mentioned in the inscriptions of Aśoka for the first time in rock edict IV of Kalasi version. In which It mentions as ".....As it has not happened for many hundred years, now by ordinance of the law of piety made by King Priyadarśī, the beloved of the gods, have now increased abstention from sacrificial slaughter of lives, avoidance of injury to creatures, respect towards relatives, respect towards Brāhmaṇas and *śramaṇas* and obedience to father and mother by exhibiting to people spectacles of heavenly palaces, elephants, displays of fire brands and other kinds of representations (of images)...."[66]

A northern pillar of eastern gateway (front face) depicts the six heavens of the gods they are:

1. The heaven of guardians of four quarters (*Chaturmahārājakāyika*)
2. The heaven of the thirty three gods (*Trayastriṁśa*)
3. The heaven of Yama the god of death (*Yāmas*)
4. The heaven called *Tuṣita* (*Tuṣitas*) where the Buddha resided before he was born on earth. (In the text *Lalitavistara* it is referred that "The *Tuṣita* abode is graced with the beauty of your virtue. O Compassionate one Shower it on the land of Jambu".)
5. The Heaven of *Nirmanarati (Nimmanarati)*
6. The heaven of the *Parinirmita-Vashavartin* Gods (*Paranirmitavaśavartins*)
7. Brahmā's heaven (*Brahmakāyika*)

The relief is intended to depict the seven heavens. In which one heaven was the residence of Buddha prior to his birth. In this relief fourth story is the *Tuṣita* heaven as describes in the *Kevaddha Sutta* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. **(Plate 4.16)**

If we rely on texts, it is the very first depiction of the Bodhisattva enjoying heavenly life. He is depicted same as the other main gods of other heaven holding *vajrā* and *amūta ghaṭa. Tuṣita* is a heavenly mansion where the Bodhisattva is a dweller, instructing and mediating in the midst of an aesthetic enjoyment of life without indulging in sensual pleasures. This scene is supposed to be taken from the *Lalitavistara,* episode, before the life of Buddha is described.

At Bharhut, heaven's name like *Rūpa-Brahmas, Kāmāvacharas, Vejayaṁta-pāsāde, Sudhaṁmā devasabhā* appears in labels.

Here *devatās* are seen enjoying dance, music and songs. It is said in the Vedas that Gods are fond of music. They like music and enjoy it. The poet-singers sing and praise the gods with the intention that the gods may be pleased, thereby and having become pleased they may grant gift. [67]

Vedic text mentioned a number of *vīṇās* like the *godhā, Kāṇḍaviṇā, aghāḷī,* or *apaghāḷalikā, piccholā, karkarikā, stambalavīṇā, tālukavīṇā, ālabu, kapiśirṣṇī* etc. A big *vīnā* was called *vāṇa* and was said to have a hundred strings of grass called *'Muñja'.*[68]

All the heavens are depicted in similar manner. The main gods of each heaven is seated between the central columns in the *lalitāsana*, holding to divine attributes (thunder bolt and *amūta ghaṭa*) the other god is seated beside the main god in the same posture empty handed on a slightly lower seat. In the third compartment of each column heavenly dancers and other musicians are performing. At Bharhut the label attached to one of the dancing scene comprises the names of four heavenly dancers as Alambuśā, Miśrakeśī, Padmāvatī, Subhadrā. One more label near to this scene describes it as "The jovial ravishing music of the gods, gay with dramatic acting". (*Sāḍika-saṁmadaṁ turaṁ devānaṁ*).

In the *Kevaddha Sutta*[69] of the *Sutta Piṭaka* a householder seeking an answer to a searching question, goes successively to the realms of the four great kings, the thirty three or *Trayastriṁśa* gods, The *Yama devas, Tuṣita* gods, *Nimmanarati* gods, *Paranimmita-Vasavatti* gods, and the Brahmā world. The seven levels of heaven refer to such a system of heavens. In one of the heaven god Śakra is holding *Vajra* in his right hand and a jar in his left hand. He is enjoying dance and music performed by heavenly nymphs. In the *Lalitavistara* there are references of heaven of *Mahārājakāyika* gods, Heaven of Trayastriṁśa, the heaven of *Yamas*, the heaven of *Tuṣitas*, the heaven of *Nirmāṇaratis*, the heaven of *Paranirmitavaśavartins* and the heaven of *Brahmakāyika* Gods. [70]

The depiction of the heaven of the thirty three gods or *Trayastriṁśa* gods whose lord is Śakra is carved on the stūpa No. III in which lord Śakra is holding a *vajra* in his one hand and another resting on the edge of square couch surrounded by his queen and lady attendants in pavilion standing on the pillars. According to the Sudhābhojana-*Jātaka*, Śakra's palace Vaijayaṁta was a thousand leagues high and his throne was made up of yellow marble, sixty leagues in extant. Śakra is said to have been accompanied by a glorious array of twenty-five million of heavenly nymphs. [71] *Dīgha Nikāya* informs us that the Buddha mentions that the gods had their *parisā* or assemblies which are as follows: assembly of the *Chātummāhārajika* gods, the assembly of the *Trayastriṁśa* gods, the assembly of Māra and the assembly of Brahmā. The *Janavasabha Suttanta* also refers to the *Trayastriṁśa* gods, the gods of *Paranimmitavasavattī, Nimmānarati, Yama, Chātummahārājika* heavens and the assembly of king Vessavana Kuvera. Such elaborate carving is not found at Sanchi stūpa No. III as well as in Stūpa No. I. as described in the above texts.

Wonderful depiction of contemporary life scenes

The art of Sanchi gives us an opportunity to peep in the contemporary life depicted with tremendous vigour and simplicity. Sculptor successfully carved the luxurious life inside the fort and rural life scenes in a very simple and natural manner. The depiction of Uruvelā village is a unique example in which ladies are shown doing household work; a lady with a man sitting and taking while grinding some thing on a peddled stone with the help of muller, whereas a lady is separating the rice husk from rice in a mortar (*okhalī*) with the help of heavy wooden stick, three ladies are fetching water from a river Nirañjanā, Lotuses are also seen in the river. One lady is going to fetch water, her hair is falling on her shoulders probably they are wet, one has filled her jar, one is still filling the jar and she is in a drooping posture. A man is shown going to the forest to graze the animals in pasturage, one man is going to plough the agricultural field holding plough with two bulls going ahead

probably his wife watching on his departure in front of her pinnacle hut. Two women are peeping out side from their balconies. Their house is big and doubled storied with pinnacle roof and arch shaped gateways. The depiction is so natural, that a lady is shown with a jar, holding her lower cloth, so that she should not get wet during fetching the water from the river. Various types of animals such as goat, sheep, buffalos, bulls and cows are also seen sitting freely in the village. The relief is depicting the scene, when Buddha was in great penance and on his way of getting enlightenment. A *Bodhimaṇḍa* with the garlanded *chhatra* over it is also seen in the middle of the relief. Two devotees are standing with folded hand on either side of *Bodhimaṇḍa*. Like wise forest life is depicted in the Vessantara *jātaka*, religious culture scene is depicted in relief of conversion of *jatīla* ascetics and youth full pleasure life from the relief *Vanavihāra* where the coupe in amorous posture spending their golden time amidst the fruit laden tree, water fall, rocky surroundings, near the river sitting drinking, and playing instruments, are depicted very beautifully.

According to H.G. Rawlinson[72] "Incidentally they throw a flood of light upon the every day life, customs and dresses of the time. Nothing could be more fascinating then these naive and wholly delightful peeps into early India." The whole range of Vedic architecture, along with that of the Buddhists seems to be represented in many panels of the Sanchi bas reliefs. Besides the stūpas, *bodhi* temples and other shrines hut, big building multi-storied structures, large cities fortified with defense walls, guarded with high gate house and decorated with arched gateways, have also been depicted in Sanchi sculptures.[73] **(Plate 4.17)**

Expressions on the face of few sculptures

At Bharhut, sculpture's facial expressions are lacking. They are devoid of any expressions like joy, misery, surprise, dedication, devotion, sorrow etc. Their expressions can only be judged by their act. At Sanchi some of the sculptures, follow the trend of Bharhut sculptures they are expressionless but few sculptures successfully convey the expression for example, *yakṣas* of the Māra army clearly expresses their dreadfulness, grotesque features, laughing dangerously and confidently before the enlightenment of Buddha. After Buddha got enlightenment the *yakṣas* of Māra army with fearful expressions running from the site of enlightenment. *Yakṣas* on the pillar capital are laughing; even their teeth can be seen in depiction. **(Plate 4.18)** Like wise on the north gate there is a depiction of foreigner worshiping stūpa, in this depiction the expression on the faces of devotees can clearly be seen. There facial expression of joy and bliss due to visiting a stūpa is remarkable.

Scenes from life of Buddha

Dream of Māya Devī

Māya's dream on right pillar, front face, second square panel of northern gateway pillar is very unique depiction, though the sculptor has not given due importance to this incident. He had taken quite small place to carve this episode of Buddha's descendent in to his mother's womb. Bodhisattva in form of elephant is coming from the left side though according to *Lalitavistara*[74] he descended in the right side of the mother's womb in a form of a white elephant.

According to the *Buddha Charita*, *Lalitavistara*, and the *Mahāvastu* the Bodhisattva assumes the form of a white elephant after leaving *Tuṣita* heaven enters Māyā's womb. The *Mahāvastu,*[75] refers that Bodhisattva do not descend into their mothers womb during the dark fortnight, but on the night of the full moon in the month of *Pauṣa*, and what Māyā has seen in her dream became reality.

Here depiction is very similar to that of Bharhut. The depiction at Bharhut is crude and the pose of Māyā Devī is rigid and formal. Here at Sanchi palace architecture depicted, a peacock sitting on the railing of terrace as an auspicious motif, two attendants are accompanying the Māyā Devī. She is seen folded her right arm kept under her head. Only front portion of Bodhisattva can be seen. At Bharhut, side view of elephant is carved. In Sanchi the episode of dream of Māya Devī, scantiness of details is surprising. It is depicted in a square relief with other incidents and in a very simple manner, where as at Bharhut though archaic, but a detailed carving in a medallion can be seen. **(Plate 4.19)**

Depiction of four derives

This episode is depicted on the north gateway, right pillar, front face, second panel, available remains of stūpa of Bharhut do not have this episode from the life of Buddha. Here is the grand procession of the prince which is portrayed. Women look on and amazed at his beauty, while

men folded their hands in a gesture of respect. A gigantic palace scene is depicted with full of royal people watching, prince going to the park out side the city of Kapilavastu. The Bodhisattva left city through the eastern gate. The Bodhisattva is riding on a chariot driven by two horses. Though invisible, a *chhatra* is placed upon his head by an attendant. People are watching eagerly from their windows, balconies and standing at the door. Perhaps Chhandaka is holding the ewer and Kaṅthaka is going in front of the chariot to witness the great event. After that, Bodhisattva witnessed old man, sick man, corpse and lastly a mendicant respectively though they are not depicted here. The episode of the four derives has been given in at a stretch in *Lalitavistara.*[76] This simple depiction is sufficient for a viewer to recognize this important episode from the life of Buddha. Sculptor has successfully depicted the palace and the people watching the prince going for the pleasure excursion. (Plate 4.20)

Depiction of *Mahābhiniṣkramaṇa*

For the first time the *Mahābhiniṣkramaṇa* scene was carved on the Sanchi stūpa No.II, here a horse Chhandaka and Kaṇṭhaka are seen with a *chhatra* above the horse in the monoscenic mode of narration.

At Bharhut, at the top is a pillared palace from where the two foot prints are coming out which is the indexical sign for the Buddha. Two deities are standing on lotus; one is standing with folded hands. Flowers are scattered all along the path where the Bodhisattva riding on the Kaṅthaka's back followed by the groom Chhandaka going out of the city. Three deities are watching him, two of them are standing with folded hands. Second time Chhandaka is not depicted and Kaṅthaka is partially visible, with two fly whisks and one *chhatra* above his back. Three deities are depicted above the horse; one standing with folded hands, second, in raised hand posture and third one's hands is placed on his chest. Below the horse, there are two deities, one is with folded hands and second is playing drum as depicted. The label along with this relief, recorded the name of one of the God angel; "Arādhagupta." Here the sculptor had tried to follow the legends narrated in the *Lalitavistara.*

At Sanchi, we also find mono-scenic depiction of *Mahābhiniṣkramaṇa* near the scroll in small space where Chhandaka is going ahead holding an ewer and behind him is a horse Kaṅthaka is going out side the city gate in slow motion, The gateway depicted here, has only two architraves, one man holding a *chhatra* and another is holding fly whisk above the horse.

Now the turn comes of elaborate and fine depiction of the episode of great departure, which is depicted on the eastern gateway, front face. The narration moves from left to right along with in the eight feet long span of the architrave. [77]

This is the most compact narration among all the depictions, which adopted the continuous narration at the Sanchi stūpa No. I. Here sculptor has used his full artistic ability and imagination to carve the great incident from the life of Buddha. Multistoried palace is depicted on the left side with city wall, river, *toraṇa,* arched shaped gateways and balconies. The horse Kaṅthaka is carved four times. Three times with Bodhisattva riding him and lastly, empty seated. The episode is witnessed by several gods from the heaven and the four *yakṣas* are supporting the hoofs of the horse Kaṅthaka so that the gallops do not make any noise.

One *yakṣa* is shown holding footwear in his one hand probably to avoid any kind of noice. For the first time dwarf *yakṣa* seen holding a sleeper *(chappal)* of right leg, Second time it was held by another *yakṣa* carved near the *bodhi* tree. Third time a *yakṣa* is shown holding a sleeper *(chappal)* of right leg against his chest. He is carved in front of the Chhandaka holding Buddha's belongings in a bag, on the way back. At last he is shown empty hand, when the horse Kaṅthaka returning to the palace.

The gods in heaven are very happy and they are beating drums and playing instruments. Above the horse is depicted a *chhatra* and fly whisk. And the last of relief, Buddha leave the Kaṅthaka and Chhandaka. Chhandaka is sitting on his knees venerating Bodhisattva with clasped hands. Buddha *pāda, chhatra* and fly whisk are indicating the presence of Buddha. Again the Kaṅthaka is depicted holding the belongings of Buddha in a bundle and looking at the Kaṅthaka probably consoling him. The tree in a railing is probably a *jambu* tree apparently reminds us the first meditation of the Bodhisattva. Above the *bodhi* tree is depicted a *chhatra.* The sculpture magnificently depicted this episode and successfully carved all the necessary details. The scene is depicted in descriptive and continuous mode of narration. A detailed description of *Mahābhiniṣkramaṇa* is given in the Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddha Charita.*[78] (Plate 4.21)

Visit of Bimbisāra

Here is a depiction of palace scene of Magadha king Bimbisāra many storied palace with arched shaped windows, pinnacle roof and the high walls of fort. King Bimbisāra in his chariot drawn by horses, are going out of palace with his retinue. On the right side, Bimbisāra with his assistant is standing folded hands in front the *Bodhimaṇḍa,* rocky terrene can also be seen. The relief depicts the episode, when Buddha before his enlightenment after meeting Ārāḍa Kālām at Vaiśāli went to Magadha near Pāṇḍava, the 'king of mountains' near Rājagūha.This episode is mentioned in *Lalitavistara.*[79] King after worshipping his feet; said, " I will give you a portion of my entire kingdom, enjoy yourself here with various pleasure, and be my inheritor"....do not live in empty forest, do not sit on the ground on grass, your body is so tender; live here in my kingdom" Then Buddha replied, " Desires are like poison, full of endless vices, felling one into hell, causing one to be born as an animal. I know desires are censurable and vile, so I have abandoned them like phlegm full of pus." The depiction is in synoptic mode of narration. **(Plate 4.22)**

Depiction of the temptation of Māra and enlightenment of Buddha

Northern gateway, rear face, middle architrave; western gateway, rear face, bottom architrave depicted the episode of temptation and assault by Māra. It is one of the earliest depictions of temptation of Māra, carved on the *toraṇas* of Sanchi. The *bodhi* tree is depicted on the left side and Māra sits in the central position, very charming, sitting on a high *āsana* in a resting posture, flanked with two lady attendants, one holding a *chhatra* over his head, he is wearing many stringed necklace big square shaped ear rings, turban, His one hand rests on the edge of couch. His army comprises pot bellied demons, with elongated pointed ears, squat nose, and thickened eyebrows. Some are playing on harp and flute some are in dancing pose, some of them are singing, some of them are beating drums. Some of the demons are singing perhaps very loudly that even their teeth and tongue are visible. On the contrary some demons are worried, must be discussing serious matter as the Buddha is in deep penance. One the left side of Māra is a charming man holding some thing in his one hand perhaps, demonstrating his strength and power. On the extreme left is a *Bodhimaṇḍa* and a *bodhi* tree over it is seen with a *chhatra* over it. A young girl perhaps Sujātā holding a spouted *lotā* and a bowl in other hand is coming out from the single arched city gateway. This depicting the event of Sujātā's offering *Kheer* to the Buddha. Two flying celestials are hovering from the sky on the either side of tree and offering garlands. On the right side of the tree are three devotees one male one female and a child. Māra symbolizes the desire, and the sensual life. He is also considered as the god of death, rebirth and the enemy of Buddhism.

In the *Lalitavistara*[80] it is narrated that the Māra engaged great fourfold army, powerful, eager for battle, terrible, thrilling, never seen or heard before,....carrying swords, bows, arrows, spears, *tomaras*, axes, *paṭṭiśas*, *bhūṣuṇḍis*, *muṣalas*, staffs, snares, clubs, discuses and *vajrakaṇayas* their bodies armed with excellent arms and mail, their heads, hands, feet and eyes turned opposite ways, their heads and eyes blazing, their bellies, hands and feet displaced, their faces radiant's, their faces and teeth terribly distorted their terrible fangs bared their thick and long tongues hanging out, their eyes red as fire.....' Some had ears like goats, ears like winnowing fans, some had ears like elephant...., some had dropsical bellies, broken nose, pitcher-bellies, some had one head two heads up to thousand heads...., some carried skulls, riding on elephants, horses, camels, bulls, donkey and buffaloes, some had their heads down an legs up. Some, who had hair like bulls, donkeys, boars mongooses, goats, sheep, cats, monkeys, wolves and jackals rushed towards Bodhisattvaà"

A panel from Sanchi western gateway depicts the enlightenment of Buddha. In the centre of relief is carved a *Bodhimaṇḍa* over it is a garlanded *bodhi* tree and *chhatra.* Mārā's army is depicted on its left side comprising of horse elephant, bull, pig, lion and a grotesque's featured demon. On the one side standing is Māra's army and on the other side deities of heaven are coming and congratulating Buddha. A seat out side the village is indicated, where Buddha performed six years long penance. Three deities are standing near the seat. It is a simple depiction in monoscenic mode of narration.

Lalitavistara refers that "Seeing this army, terrible.....frightening, he is not surprised, nor agitated; he will certainly be victorious today. Think all the gods in their mind and entered into Bodhisattva's heart and bow to him."

The ferocious hosts of Māra, the tempter, assail the meditation of the Buddha who was sited under the *bodhi* tree. They brandish weapons fling uprooted trees and prodigious rocks against him, and attempted by every means to break the calm of his meditation. By threats, they strive and arouse some fear of death, the trace of an impulse of self-preservation, a wish to cling to the perishable frame of body, which they were menacing with destruction. Simultaneously, the charm of life, all its loveliness in the guise of divine women is displayed before him, so that the allure of the senses should move him. Literary he was provoked, tempted but all attractions failed and could not allure Buddha.[81]

In another relief, it is depicted that at last the evil Māra was defeated. *Lalitavistara* further refer "Sorrow, fear, ill-luck, grief, destruction, calumny, insult and humiliation these have I gained today, singing against the pure Soul.."Gods, *Asuras*, *Garuḍa*, Lords of the *Rākṣasas* and *Kinnaras*, Brahmā, Śakra, Paranirmita, upto the Kaniṣṭha, speak of his victory, "victory to the Hero of the world, that this army of Namuchi has been defeated by you." They gave him necklaces, crescents, banners, umbrellas and flags, flowers and *aguru*, shower *tagara* and sandal powder. They strike on the *tūryas* and said, "seated at the tree, O Hero, you are a lion defeating the enemy."[82] (Plate 4.23)

Depiction of seven weeks after the enlightenment

Enlightened Buddha is said to have spend seven weeks at different places at Bodhgaya. All seven weeks are duly described in *Lalitavistara* [83] and in *Nidāna Kathā.*[84] The Mahāvastu[85] refers that after the enlightenment he sat for one week on his bed of straw at the foot of *bodhi* tree with his legs crossed. Then at second week the Buddha rose up from his throne, surveyed the *bodhi* tree with *Nāga's* look and with steady gaze. The third week he spent walking up and down a long way in joy and ease. Then fourth week Buddha spent in joy and ease at the abode of *Nāga* king Kāla. Then the Buddha spent the fifth week fasting in joy and eases at the abode of Muchalinda the *Nāga* king. Then Buddha went to spend sixth week at goatherd's banyan tree. He spent the seventh week fasting in joy and ease at a shrine of many *devas* in a thicket of *Kṣīrikā* trees. Thus the Buddha fasted for seven weeks or forty-nine days.

According to *Lalitavistara* the Buddha spend first week seated beneath the sacred tree. In the second week he traversed with long strides, encompassing the *Trisāhasra Mahāsāhasra Lokadhātu.* In the third week Buddha looked with unblinking gaze on the seat of enlightenment thinking that, " I have brought to an end the supreme birth, old age, death and pain, after attaining *Saṁbodhi.*" In the fourth week Buddha traversed with youthfully charming stride, encompassing from the eastern sea to the western sea. At that time Māra again came and ask the Buddha to attain complete *nirvāṇa.* Buddha replied and said, "I will not enter perfect *nirvāṇa*, until the four assemblies become controlled enlightened and adept in advising *dharma* along with its marvels." He stayed in the '*ratnaghara*' a jewel house (carved in southern gateway, right pillar, inner face, second panel, kept in museum, Sanchi) where the gods paid homage to him.[86]

In the fifth week serpent king Muchalinda saved him from the severe rain and storm make a coil of his body around the Buddha. In the sixth week Buddha went to goatherd's *nyagrodha* tree (carved in southern gateway, right pillar, front face, top panel, in museum) between the abode of Muchalinda and the goatherd's on the bank of the river Nirañjanā. seventh week, Buddha kept seated under the Tārayāṇa tree, at that time, two brothers from *Uttarāpatha* named Trapuṣa and Bhallika, (depicted on southern gateway, right pillar, front face, third panel, kept in museum) merchants, were going from *Dakṣiṇāpatha* to *Uttarāpath* with various goods, having made great profits along with a great caravan, with five full carts. They have two bullocks of good class named Sujāta and Kīrti. They offered Buddha honeyed wheat and peeled sugarcane. But Buddha at that time do not have a bowl to accept the alms, so the four *Lokapāl* gods offered alms bowls to Buddha, in which the rich merchant Trapuṣa and Bhallika gave wheat and honey to Buddha. We find slight difference in the description of the life of Buddha after enlightenment during these days, in these texts. It seems that the sculptor had followed the tradition of *Nidāna Kathā.* (Plate 4.24)

Svāstika's offering

Southern gateway, right pillar, inner face, third panel (loose fragment kept in the archaeological museum Sanchi) depicted the episode of Svāstika offering grass to Buddha. Buddha before taking his seat to attain enlightenment under the *bodhi* tree received bundles of grass from the grass-cutter Svāstika and spread them on the seat. This relief has a great importance because it is depicting an important incident from the life of Buddha.

According to the *Lalitavistara*,[87] "Bodhisattva saw on the right of the path, a grass-mover named Svāstika, cutting grass that was blue, tender, soft, beautiful, curling to the right, the colour of a peacock's neck, as pleasant to the touch as kācilinda, fragrant, bright and lovely. Seeing this, Bodhisattva said to Svāstika "Give me grass at once, O Svāstika, today I have great need of grass. Destroying *Namuchi* along with his forces, I will touch supreme tranquil *bodhi*...."And then taking the handful of grass, very tender, the Buddha walked away with the gait of lion or a swan, the earth trembled. Gods and *Nāgas*, delighted, with folded hands and said today he will destroy the forces of Māra and touch immortality." In the relief in front of the *bodhi* tree and *Bodhimaṇḍa* is a grass cutter in bending posture and cutting grass from his half round sickle holding in one hand two flying deities are hovering from the above and two devotees standing folded hand on the other side of grass cutter. **(Plate 4.24)**

Trapuṣa and Bhallika passing through Uruvelā

On the last day of his seven weeks spent in the Uruvelā village after enlightenment, while passing through the village in his cart, Trapuṣa and Bhallika offered food to Buddha. (Depicted on southern gateway, right, front face, third panel, kept in museum, Sanchi) Here in the relief the merchants are seen going to *Uttarāpatha* in their bullock cart with their *cāravān*. **(Plate 4.25)**

Presentation of bowl

When Trapuṣa and Bhallika offered food to Buddha, He was not having any bowl so the four guardian deities from the four directions offered the bowl to Buddha. (Depicted on the southern gateway, right pillar, front face, middle panel, kept in museum, Sanchi). One of the guardian deity Śakra is seen with his musician Pañchaśikh. (Plate 4.26) These reliefs depicted the seven weeks of Buddha after attaining attainment including the Svāstika's offering have incidental value.

The miracle of the Buddha walking on the water

Buddha performed three thousand five hundred miracles in order to convert the Kassapa brothers. This was the last miracle performed by him. (Depicted on eastern gateway, left pillar, front face, third panel).

Once while Buddha was residing at Uruvilva (Uruvelā village), at that time a heavy rain fell untimely; and an enormous flood arose. The place where the Buddha lived was covered with water. Buddha thought: 'what if I were to cause the water to move away round about, and if I were to walk up and down in the midst of the water on a dust-covered spot.' And the Buddha caused the water to recede round about, and he walked up and down in the midst of the water on a dust-covered spot. And the *Jaṭila* Uruvelā Kassapa, who was afraid that the water might have carried away the great *Śramaṇa*, went with a boat together with many *Jaṭilas* to the place where the Buddha lived. The *Jaṭila* saw the Buddha, who had caused the water to recede round about, walking up and down in the midst of the water on a dust-covered spot. Seeing him, he said to the Buddha, "are you there, great *Śramaṇa*? Here I am, Kassapa,' replied the Buddha, and he rose up in the air and stationed himself in the boat, the Kassapa thought that truly *Śramaṇa* possesses high magical powers, since the water does not carry him away. He is not however, holy like me. At last the Buddha thought, "this foolish man will still for a long time think thus, "Truly the great *Śramaṇa* possesses high magical powers and great faculties; he is not, however, holy like me." Buddha thought, "What if I were to move the mind of this *Jaṭila"*. He said to the Kassapa, " You are not holy (*arahā*), Kassapa, nor have you entered the path of *Arahatship*, nor do you walk in such a practice as will lead you to *Arahatship*, nor do you walk in such a practice as will lead you to *Arhatship*, or to entering the path of *Arhataship*." This statement of Buddha converted Uruvelā Kassapa and he bagged for pabbajjā and upasampādā ordinations from the Buddha. They flung their hair, braids, their provisions and the things for the *agnihotra* sacrifice in to the river.[88]

Here indexical sign for the Buddha is a promenade on the water. Again the Kāśayapa brothers are seen venerating him folded hand. On the ground the Buddha is indicated by a *Bodhimaṇḍa* under a garlanded tree. Six trees, including the tree under which Buddha is seated, small plants, lotus flowers, river waves, six swans, crocodile and two monkeys are depicted very beautifully in a small rectangular relief. **(Plate 4.27)**

Conversion of Kassapa (Kāśyapa) brothers

This relief represents a scene from the episode of the conversion of Kāsyapa brother's at Uruvilvā. It is very

important from the point of view that it represents the earliest Hindu (fire) temple. The structure is stands on the wooden pillars; half rounded roof probably made of wood or mud with railing below it and arched shaped windows. This episode is depicted on eastern gateway, left pillar, inner face, second panel.

According to the legend, Once Buddha was in Uruvelā village, at the time there lived in Uruvelā, three *Jaṭilas*, Uruvela Kassapa, *Nadi* Kassapa and Gayā Kassapa. Of these the Uruvelā Kassapa was chief. Buddha begged for permission to dwell in the fire temple. It was granted. Kāsyapa brothers subsequently warned him that a mighty snake is living inside the fire temple. "The Buddha entered the room where the fire was kept, made himself a couch of grass, and surrounding himself with watchfulness of mind and the *nāga* annoyed and irritated and sent forth a cloud of smoke....And Buddha affected the appropriate exercise of miraculous power and sent forth a cloud of smoke When they both shone forth with flames, the fire room looked as if were burning and blazing, as if it were all in flames ....conquering the *nāga* fire by his fire, threw him into his alms bowl."[89]

The representation is very lively and unique. Inside the fire temple was a five hooded snake with big round coil, A pedestal pot is also carved with flames burning high near a *āsana* which is the indexical sign for the Buddha. On the right side Kāśyapa brothers are telling Buddha about snake which lived inside the temple. On the left side they are seen standing with folded hands out of adoration to Buddha after he caught it into his alms bowl. The fire temple is seen situated amidst the forest area various trees behind the fire temple and monkey on trees justify it. Below it is carved a *parṇa kuṭī* with a yogi sitting in front of it, wearing *yogapaṭṭa*, a fire worshipper perhaps telling him that the preparation for fire worship is ready. The ladle (*śrugha)*, lighted fire in fire pot and wooden sticks (*samidhā*) suggests that the fire worship will soon be performed by the Kāśyapa brothers and their disciples. Some of their followers are taking bath in river some are going to fetch the water with a jar carrying on their back. River Nirañjanā is full of water with lotuses and swans in side. The waves are beautifully lepicted. And the cows, buffaloes, elephants are also seen probably coming to the river side. Over all depiction is very lively portraying a real religious life of Hindu ascetic of those times. Here the sculptor has used single relief to depict the miracle performed by the Buddha at fire temple, Uruvilvā.The long hairs coiled in the form of *jatā mukuṭa* drapery of tree bark on the body of Kāsyapa brothers and their followers is worth noticeable.**(Plate 4.28)**

The episode of Kāśyapa conversion (Depicted on eastern gateway, left pillar, inner face, third panel) relates that after the miracle of the fire temple Kāśyapa brothers were engaged in sacrifices "At that time one day the *Jaṭilas* who wished to attend on their sacred fires, could not succeed in splitting fire wood. But due to the magic power of Buddha the fire wood did not split. Then the Buddha said 'shell the fire wood be split Kassapa? Let it be spilt, great *śramaṇa*. Then in a moment the five hundred pieces of fire wood were spilt. When the Brāhmaṇas tried to light a fire the wood due to the Buddha's magic would not burn and also the wood would not cut.[90] But after the permission given by the Buddha, scarifies were easily performed. In the relief is seen two Brāhmaṇas trying to cut the wood; one is trying to burn the fire and offering something in fire pot; a Brāhmaṇa carrying two baskets; one is carrying wood on his shoulder. At the right side of relief one Brāhmaṇa is performing the sacrifices. Interestingly, a Brahmanical Stūpa can be seen behind the Brāhmaṇas, without any openings. Now these three reliefs exhibits one good example of relief composition probably for the first time in early Buddhist art.

The descent of Buddha from the *Trayastriṁśa* heaven

This episode of Buddha's life is depicted in Bharhut. Here unlike the Bharhut instead of three only one stairway in three dimensional views is carved. Moreover indexical sign for Buddha, is tree with *Bodhimaṇḍa* at the top and below the stairway and not the Buddha *pāda* like Bharhut. Four gods are sitting with folded hands two are kneeling on the either side of the *Bodhimaṇḍa*, two are beating drums, and four gods on the either side of the stairway are standing with folded hands. One deity is probably holding a stick in one hand and a lotus on the other hand. Some of the figures are wearing very elaborate headgear. Two trees on ground are depicted full-blown and devotees are standing near the tree and on the either side of the *Bodhimaṇḍa* placed under the tree. The depiction of the episode at Sanchi is superior. One thing may be noted that the distinction is made between the divine and human beings on either side of the stairway.

The latter, in the for ground at the foot of the stairway are about half the sizes of the former, who are ranged in tiers above them, and as a consequence the perspective method of showing the larger figures in front is here reversed.

There is no variety in there faces no individuality in their expression, no mutual interplay of feeling between them. To the extant that they are doing the same thing in the same way that they are worshipping. No different feeling can be seen in the sculptures. **(Plate 4.29)**

Gift of bamboo groove

The relief is showing the gift of bamboo park by king Bimbisāra to Buddha According to the text from Uruvilva to Gayāsīsa and then at Rājagūha Buddha reached there and *Seniya* Bimbisāra met him and thought that "There is the *Veḷuvana* my pleasure garden, is not too far from the town and not to near but suitable for going and coming .....And the Magadha king *Seniya* Bimbisāra took a golden vessel and dedicated the garden to him." I give up this *Veḷuvana* pleasure garden to the fraternity of *Bikkhus* with Buddha at its head. The Buddha accepted the *ārāma.* [91] The episode is mentioned in *Veḷuvanadāna Sutta.*

In the relief two royal ladies are shown sited in front of *Bodhimṇḍa* and worshiping the Buddha other female devotees also venerating the Buddha. King Bimbisāra is standing on the right side with folded hand. The incident of gift of the *Veḷuvana* can very well recognized by the bamboo tree carved on either side of relief. **(Plate 4.30)**

Worship of Buddha's headgear

The episode of the worship of the Head dress of the Buddha is also depicted at Bharhut and Katar. Sculptor depicted it in three episodes; one, place of worship where the *chuḍā* is placed in a tray, second, the palace from where heavenly gods and goddesses are sitting and peeping out side from the window and third, the place where the heavenly nymph are performing dance in the honour of Buddha's *chuḍā* worship ceremony. The label "*Bhagavato chūḍāmaho*" is attached with it.

If we compare this depiction from the Sanchi, we find a very simple depiction. Here *chuḍā* is placed below in a barrel roofed pavilion with arched shaped window in the centre. Terrace is encircled by a railing. *chuḍā* is placed in a tray, over it is a *chhatra.* Nymphs are dancing and some gods are sitting with folded hands before the *chuḍā* and some are standing with folded hands. Though figure are more refined then those at Bharhut. But depiction is more elaborate and lively at Bharhut than at Sanchi. At both the side heavenly nymphs are plying various types of instruments. Names of some musical instruments occurred in Vedas are *vāṇa, godhā, Piṅgā,* (string instruments like Harp), *dundubhi, vīṇā* or *tūṇava* and in *Lalitavistara* the names of the some Musical instruments occurred such as ; *bherī,* conch-shell, *mūdaṅga,* the *paḷaha,* the *tūṇava, lyre, vallakī* and *tāḍasampādī.* It Buddhist *Jātakas* five kids of musical instruments are described such as *turiya, vīṇā, veṇu, pancangikam turiyam nacca, gīta,* and *vādita.*[92] **(Plate 4.31a, b)**

Scenes related to the historic events of king Aśoka

Aśoka's visit to stūpa of Rāmagrāma

Ramagāma was one of the principal towns existing in India in the sixth century BCE. The *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* records that the inhabitants of Rāmagrāma belonged to the serpent race. It was the seat of the Independent clan of the Koliyas and the place where they erected a stūpa on the Buddha's relics that they had claimed and obtained after the *Mahāparinirvaṇa.* In the text *Mahāvanso,* it is mentioned that Aśoka had created a life sized figure of the Buddha with the aid of the *nāga* king Mahākāla and visited the stūpa of Rāmagrām protected by *nāgas* but did not obtain the relics.[93] According to *Aśokāvadāna* Aśoka went to the Rāmagrāma stūpa where he saw that the *nāgas* (serpent king) were worshiping stūpa. It was the eight stūpa erected earlier containing the relics of Buddha. Aśoka wanted to open it but failed to do so as they did not allow open the stūpa.[94] At last Aśoka left the thought of opening the stūpa.

Here the sculptor successfully depicted the episode when the Aśoka visited the stūpa of Rāmagrāma. He is seen on a chariot driven by two horses and his retinue is also seen, some people are riding on horse some are on elephants. Horse rider is holding a ewer and elephant riders are carrying flags with the *triratna* headed stick. He is coming towards the stūpa on the other side is seen the king *nāga* with his people. It may be noted here that every *nāga* has five hoods on their head and *nāgi* has only one hood. Even male child has five hoods. Every one has a great devotion towards the stūpa some *nāgī* held ewer in their hand and offering objects in a plate on the other hand. Every one are folding their

hands and offering prayers to the stūpa. Two flying deities are hovering from the upper side of stūpa. Stūpa is oval shaped and has three railings upper, middle and lower. One *chhatra* and an altar are placed over the *harmikā*. Dense vegetation are shown by the sculptor, suggested the forest site were the stūpa of Rāmgrāma was erected. (Plate 4.32a)

Aśokas visit to *Bodhi* tree

Aśoka's Rock Edict VIII and Pillar Inscriptions I-II speak of his pilgrimage to Buddhist holy places as Bodhgaya and Lumbini. In the rock edict No. VIII it is written that "King Priyadarśī, beloved of Gods visited *Saṁbodhi* ten years after his coronation. Thence started these pilgrimages for *dharma....*".[95 & 96]

This pilgrimage of Aśoka has been very lively depicted by the sculptor. Here we see the *bodhi* tree with *chhatra* over it and garlands. A structure built over the six pillars having vase-shaped bases and a vaulted roof with *chaitya* arches. Inside is seen an empty throne decorated with *triratna*. *Bodhi* tree is carved very magnificently and adorned with *chhatra* and garlands. Below this is a relief depicting Emperor Aśoka with his two queens and attendants carrying *chhatra*, fly whisk and a *ghaṭa*. Two women on either side are seen sitting on a couch and perhaps selling some goods. Overall scene is very well depicted in the episode "visit of Aśoka to the *bodhi* tree". But from the anatomical point of view the depiction have some lacuna, legs of Aśoka is not depicted properly. In spite their high status the king and queens are not profusely ornamented. Sculptor is failed to depict these royal figures in their suitable manner. The sculptor successfully depicted the figures in motion as they are going towards the *bodhi* tree.

Another version of Aśoka visiting *bodhi* shrine is depicted on east *toraṇa* where he is elegantly dismounting from the elephant, lady attendants is holding *chhatra* and *chāuri*, a child perhaps Mahendra and one of his queens also seen. Some soldiers accompanying Aśoka riding on elephant, some are riding on horse. Some ladies are playing music instruments like flute. Over all scenes is in static mode of narration. On the other side of *bodhi* tree some people held *triratna* headed stick or pole, some held a lotus headed pole, some are playing musical instruments, some holding a water jar to offer it to the *bodhi* tree. Architecture of *bodhi* shrine is simple standing on the pillars; it is open pavilion with barrel vaulted roof and arched shaped windows in it. **(Plate 4.32b,c)**

This depiction is actually narrated in *Asokāvadāna*. Aśoka and his queen visiting sacred place, is perhaps for the first time depicted in a small square relief, at Sanchi stūpa No. II. He and his queens with female attendants are going to sacred Buddhist place, he is on his chariot. At Sanchi, Aśoka is depicted with queens, attendants and retinue. Recently excavated stūpa remains at Kanaganahalli, the sculptured panels reveal the rulers of the Sātavāhana dynasty portrayed in procession besides Aśoka, [97]the Buddhist monarch of Mauryan dynasty.[98] The relief has a very similar depiction attached with the inscription mentioning the name of Aśoka, showing him with his queen and female attendants. It shows that king Aśoka was very famous king amongst the Buddhist pantheon. **(Plate 4.32d, e)**

First sermon

Sarnath has the privilege of being the place of the first sermon of Buddha. Here after attaining the enlightenment Buddha turned the Wheel of Law. The sculptor of Sanchi expressed it by depicting a pillar unlike the Aśokan pillar at Sarnath. Here, the pillar had stepped base over it a vase and the pillar had an inverted lotus and over it placed a huge *chakra* with 32 spokes surmounted by the *chhatra* and garlands. The flying deities are venerating it on either side with folded hands. The depiction of deer is very important here as it represent the place of *mūigadāva* or deer park. It may be mentioned here that the pillar is entirely different from that erected by Aśoka at Sarnath. Sculptor has given emphasis on *chakra*. He had just ignored to depict the majestic and magnificent lions which were once soul of Sarnath pillar. Epigraphic evidence shows that Sarnath was, at first a centre of the *Theravāda* group (i.e. *Sthaviravāda*),[99] the earliest popular school which became a popular art centers in later period.

In this mutilated architrave, tremendous changes occurred in depicting first sermon. *Chakra* is placed on *āsana,* two deer are sitting on the either side of it surrounded by the other devotees and deer, background is full of flowering tree. This is very important depiction in view of iconography of first sermon. Here, Aśokan pillar is absent. Wheel is placed with *āsana* flanked by two deer. In the later Buddhist art, wheel placed on *āsana* and deer flanking

it on either side is carved on the pedestal of Buddha image depicting 'Turning of the Wheel of Law' *mudrā*. Buddha deliberately chose the place of first sermon. When four deities of *bodhi* tree namely, Dharakāya, Dharmamati, Dharmacharin, Dharmaruchi inquired in this matter, Where, O Lord, will you turn the wheel of Dharma? Buddha replied, "At the deer park at Ṛṣipatana in Vārāṇasī." They said "O Lord the great city of Vārāṇasī has a poorer population, the tree of the deer park give scant shade. There are other cities, O Lord, rich, opulent, happy, prosperous, beautiful, full of many people, decked with gardens, parks and hills. In one of those O Lord, turn the Wheel of *Dharma*." Buddha said, "Not so, gentlemen. Why? "Due to the sixty thousand *koṭi nayuta* sacrifices that I have performed there, the sixty thousand *koṭi nayuta* Buddhas that were worshipped there, the excellent city named Vārāṇasī, home of the previous *Ṛṣis*, praised by god and *nāgas* on earth is ever inclined to *dharma*." "I remember the ninety-one *koṭi* thousand previous Buddhas, who turn the excellent wheel at the beautiful forest named *Ṛṣi patina*, I will turn the Supreme Wheel." [100] **(Plate 4.33a, b)**

War of relics

One of the illustrations symbolising "War of relics" showing the Malla clan of Kuśinārā, who took custody of the corporeal relics of Buddha, when he passed away in their region and was cremated by Mallas of Kuśīnagara. It is a wonderful masterpiece of early Buddhist art. The Mallas of Kuśīnagara wanted to keep for themselves all the relics of Buddha. But seven chiefs of other clan, the king of Magadha, Ajātasattu, Lichchhavis of Vaiśāli, Sākiyas of Kapilavatthu, Bulis of Allakappa, Koliyas of Rāmagāma, Brāhmaṇa of Vethadīpa and Mallas of Pāvā also sent a messenger and claimed for Buddha's relics. When they heard these things the Mallas of Kuśīnagara spoke to the assembly, "The Blessed One" died in our village domain we will not give away any part of the remains of blessed one.[101]

When Mallas refused to give relics of the Buddha, they waged war against them. From the right, the enemies arrive. In the middle is the siege of the city and on the left the departure of the victors is illustrated. The town itself, surrounded by a fort wall and gates, tower, battlements with balconies, gives a living picture of what an old Indian city must have looked like.[102]

In the relief, seven kings are shown with their four types of army. The kings are riding on horse, chariot drawn by horse and on the back of elephant. Most powerful king Ajātasattu is carefully depicted by sculptor. He is shown wearing a big elongated turban. Riding on a horse chariot, his one hand is in boon giving posture one is holding edge of chariot, wearing enormous jewellery in comparison to other king and two men are shown holding conch shell (*śaṅkh*). Some soldiers of his army are holding *musals*. Behind him, one man is holding *chhatra* and other attendant is holding fly whisk. In the relief, three female body guards of kings wearing different type of jewellery, tying scarf or some protective bend around their head are shown. Perhaps they belong to some other country. One of them is holding a *bhālā* and other two are holding *chhatra*. Above the head of every king an attendant is holding a *chhatra*. A dwarf in the middle is carrying a spouted ewer.

They waged wars against the Mallās claiming a share of the relics, in the relief, fort city of Mallās is majestically carved with high fort wall, arched shaped balcony, multi-storied palace and bastions. Mallās of Kusinārā are shown fighting with their enemies, blowing arrows, holding *musals*, throwing stones. In the reply, army of seven clans is also fighting, blowing arrows, *bhālā's*, holding shields to protect themselves. As they belong to different clan they are seen wearing different dresses.

At the left corner, the relief depicts the elephants, carrying Buddha's relics some are kept on their head and some on the head of the elephant. According to *Mahā-Parinibbāna-Suttanata*,[103] a Brāhmaṇa named Droṇa addressed the assembly and said, "Unseemly is it regarding the division of the remains of him, who was the best of beings. Strife should arise, and wounds, and war! Let us all, with one accord unite. In friendly harmony to make eight portions wide spread let *thūpas* rise in every land that in the enlightened one mankind may trust!" and then the Brāhmaṇa divided the relics of Buddha in to eight portion and said, "Give me this vessel, and I will set up over it a sacred cairns, and in its honour I will establish a feast."

In the relief, elephant rider is carrying the relic casket on his head out of joy they are playing different kind of instruments, and one such share holder is entering their

city with great joy. They are blowing conch, flute, and stringed instrument.

The city is beautifully depicted, high city wall gateways, moat with lotus flowers, arched shaped windows, out of windows bejeweled ladies are watching them curiously and happily. Smiling face can clearly be seen. **(Plate 4.34a, b, c, d)**

Stūpa worshiped by the foreigners

The relief depicts a stūpa with *harmikā* at the top two railings one at the middle part and one at the base and third one is also at the base provided with the *toraṇa* having only two architraves with scrolled ends. Four flying deities are hovering on the either side of the stūpa and the human being probably from the north western part of the India is venerating the stūpa. Their clothing, hair dress, capes, music instruments even flags suggest that they are foreigner. Flags have clear depiction of moon and stars, held by one of the devotees; in his hand and another flag with similar depiction is offered at the stūpa, can be seen on the right side of the *harmikā*.

Overall depiction suggests that this stūpa is probably of Sanchi stūpa, in those times it was so popular that devotees from distance places used to come and worship the stūpa. Most of the devotees are plying instruments like *dholak*, Roman type double ended flute, (A composite double wind-pipe known as Syrinx or pan-pipe was a folk instrument for thousands of years in Greece since Homeric times), curved trumpet, the end of which look like swan or snake, and harp. They had curly hairs, wear knee length skirts, tunic, cloaks, boots and conical cap. They can be identified as the Scythians of the Tigrakhauda clan who wore pointed caps. [104] The symbols of stars and crescent shaped moon are clearly depicted in the flags held by a devotee. The group of devotees also offered the flag to the stūpa which can be seen on the top of the stūpa near *chhatra*. Vidya Dehejia[105] feels that this stūpa is perhaps situated in north-western India on the basis of the costume of its worshipers. These devotees are from the north-western part of the ancient India, their drapery, music instruments and their flag on which is carved moon and stars proves it.

Contrary to this statement John C. Huntington suggested that this is the Vaiśāli stūpa since monkey offering honey to Lord Buddha depicted on the same pillar. The incident happened at Vaiśāli. But we suppose it to be Sanchi stūpa, itself visited by northerners. Though the stūpa depicted here have two architraves and two railings at the ground but the stūpa depicted here narrates its former position, when its railings and gateways were built in wooden form before the renovations and extensions done by the Sātavāhana. Wooden *harmikā* can be seen on the top of the stūpa. **(Plate 4.35)**

Monkeys offering honey to Buddha

This is the representation of one of the eight important events of Buddha's life. When he was at Vaiśāli, a monkey is said to have offered honey to him. Here a *Bodhimaṇḍa* (āsan) is depicted on the right side under a tree. Two more trees can be seen at the back side; three devotees kneeling down in front of *Bodhimaṇḍa*. Two men while standing are witnessing the miracle with two ladies standing beside them, holding things to be offered to Buddha. One monkey is offering honey in a bowl, and a monkey is coming towards the Buddha.

Huien Tsang, while describing his visit to Vaiśālī, refers, to the monkey tank (*markaṭa hrada*) and says that near the west side of the tank was the spot the monkeys took Buddha's bowl on a tree give him honey near the south bank was a top, the place where the monkeys presented the honey."[106] Certain Chinese authority relate the following episode of Buddha's life to Śrāvastī[107] and some relate this event had happened at Mathura[108] *Dhammapada* commentary[109] tells that it happened in Kauśāmbī. **(Plate 4.36)**

Buddha returned to Kapilavastu and miracles performed in various places

After enlightenment when Buddha went to Kapilvastu his father came to meet him. At that time Buddha walked in the air, because he thought, "The Sākyans are a proud people. If I welcome them sitting down on my seat, they will change their minds about me.....that's why he did not stand up to greet his father, who is old and venerable. And yet there is no being or group of beings whose heads would not split into seven were the *Tathāgata* to stand up to great them. Let me now then rise up into the air to the height of a man and take a long walk." So the Buddha rose up in the air to the height of a man and took a long walk without touching the ground with his feet. King was thrilled with wonder seeing such a miracle, this shows that the prince

had mastered the dharma and that he was the supreme of bipeds in the whole world.[110]

King Śuddhodana is seen with his retinue and a *chhatra* over his head is held by an attendant. Two royal ladies are offering things to Buddha. King is standing with folded hands. Three flying celestial are also venerating Buddha with garlands. *Bodhimaṇḍa* below the tree is indexical sign for the Buddha. A promenade is also seen above the tree. This static composition is very well depicted, the episode in static monoscenic mode of narration.

In another relief, Buddha is preaching to the *Śākya* clansmen his return to Kapilavastu. In the centre a *Bodhimaṇḍa* is seen under a tree above which a *chhatra* is placed which is the indexical sign for the presence of Buddha. Nobel men are sitting on couch. And other persons are sitting around the tree. Two winged flying deities are offering garlands to the *bodhi* tree.

The topmost panel, of the eastern pillar of north gate of Sanchi portrays the Śrāvastī miracle and presents the moment, after the miracle, when the mango tree has emerged as full grown tree from a mango seed. Noble persons are sitting folded hands around the tree and two men are beating drums. Mango tree is laden with mangos under it is places the *Bodhimaṇḍa*. Some devotees are standing behind the *Bodhimaṇḍa*, wearing stylish turban. All this depiction is depicted in static monoscenic mode of narration. **(Plate 4.37)**

Vanavihāra

Number of reliefs at Sanchi depicted couples in amorous posture plying, drinking enjoying with each others ambiance in natural places, full of tree, water falls lotus filled ponds, peacocks, beautiful flowered trees near the rocky terrene. This scene depicts heavenly gods like Yāma, Suyāma and Saṃtuṣita, and Māra enjoying the company of divine nymphs.

In one episode, when Buddha was trying to attain *nirvāṇa*, Māra the god of death send his charming glamorous, young daughters to allure the Buddha so that he could not attain the enlightenment. While alluring to Buddha the Māra's daughters said to the Buddha, "This is spring, the excellent season, the delighter of women and men, when darkness and dust disappeared, resounding with the calls of the cuckoo, the swan and the peacock, and bird-songs, the time has arrived for the enjoyment of amorous sports.[111] In the abode of the gods, surrounded by divine nymphs, like the king of gods, praised by immortals like Yāma, Suyāma and Saṃtuṣita, and in the abode of Māra, under the control of amorous women, enjoy greatly passionate sports with us." Exact narration as conveyed about the *vanavihāra* is depicted at Sanchi stūpa No. I. In the *Brahmajāla Sutta*[112] (*Dīgha Nikāya*) tells us about the two classes of gods; the *Khiḍḍāpadosikā* and the *Manopadosikā*. Both these classes are of a rather low order. Thus the Buddha says that the *Khiḍḍāpodosikā* gods spend their time in laughing, playing, and enjoying sensual pleasures. For this reason they lose control over mind, as a result of which they fall down from their position and are reborn in the human world. Perhaps the relief is showing the *Khiḍḍāpadosikā* gods, enjoying sensual pleasures. Though these types of scene do not occurred in the sculptural remains of Bharhut sculptures but some traces of amorous sports can be traced from the Sanchi stūpa No. II., where a couples is riding on an elephant, and a young woman is climbing on elephant and man is standing inside the lotus filled pond, enjoying the *vanvihāra*. **(Plate 4.38)**

Depiction of *nāga* king Sudarśana

The scene is identified as *nāga* Muchalinda episode by Marshall, the story at stretch told in *Mahāvagga*. The episode is duly depicted at Pauni, Bharhut and Sanchi stūpa No. II. Here the *nāga* Muchalinda is shown in coiled body and hood is depicted above the seat as if saving him from the storm and cold for seven days and nights. He is the first to encounter the newly enlightened Buddha and the first to recognize his holiness.

Here, at Sanchi, the depiction is entirely different. In this depiction, the five hooded *nāga* king is sitting in front of the *Bodhimaṇḍa* in resting position holding a lotus, three *nāga* ladies sitting on a couch drinking some thing. On their right side nāga ladies are playing on drum, flute and harp; dancing and singing. On the left side, one nāga lady holding *chāuri*, one is holding a *ghaṭa*. Two pair of flying deities are hovering above of Bodhi tree and garlanding it. *Nāga* ladies have only one hood whereas *nāga* king has five hoods. *Nāga* king and his ladies are perhaps celebrating newly enlightened Buddha. The cup in their hands can be clearly seen.

In fact it is not *nāga* Muchalinda but *nāga* king Sudarśana. As text *Mahāvagga*[113] also suggests that *nāga* Muchalinda at the end of the rainy whether loosened his windings from the body of the blessed one, made his own appearance disappear, created the appearance of a youth, and stationed himself in front of the Buddha, raising his clasped hands, and paying reverence to the blessed one. The Buddha, perceiving that, on this occasion, pronounced solemn utterance; Happy is the solitude of him who is full of joy, which has learnt the truth, which sees the truth. Happy is freedom from malice in this world, self restraint towards all beings that have life. Happy is freedom from lust in this world, getting beyond all desires; the putting away of that pride which comes from the thought I am thus truly is the heights happiness." In the later Buddhist art *nāga* Muchalinda has been depicted in coiled body and erected hood over the head of Buddha and some times over the pair of foot of Buddha. At Amravati a relief is showing footprints of Buddha surrounded by *nāga* coil (3rd c. A.D., Lime stone 120. cm. BM120) is for an example. Another relief from Amravati is depicting Buddha sheltered by Muchalinda. (3rd century. Limestone; 136.6 cm., BM 70). A relief from Goli (Andhra Pradesh) depicted Buddha sheltered by Muchalinda (3rd century. White limestone; 41.9 c. Los Angeles Country museum of Art, M. 71.54) and also showing *nāga* coming towards Buddha in *añjali mudrā* or with folded hands. These examples proves that *nāga* Muchalinda always depicted in coiled body form sheltering Buddha by its canopy over Buddha's head or some time he is depicted coming towards Buddha in *añjli mudrā* when the storm was over. It seems thus, the relief of Sanchi stūpa No. I is not showing the *nāga* Muchalinda but *nāga* Sudarśana who invited Buddha for meal before he left for Sarnath.

After enlightenment, when the Buddha decided to go to Kāśī for turning the "Wheel of Law", he was invited to live and dine by the *nāga* king Sudarśana at Gayā. According to text *Lalitavistara* and *Mahāvastu*,[114] "*Tathāgata* at Gayā was invited to live and dine by the *nāga* king Sudarśana. From there, *Tathāgata* went to Rohitavastu, Urubilvakalpa, Anala, and Sārathipura. In all these places, *Tathāgata* was invited to live and dine by the householders, and ultimately he came to the bank of river Ganga". In *Buddha Charita* it is mentioned that, "Having stayed in the dwelling of the prince of the *nāgas*, named Sudarśana, on the occurrence of night, he ate a morning meal consisting of the five kinds of ambrosia, and departed, gladdening him with his blessing. After that he also went to the place of Brāhmaṇa named Nandin, *yakṣa* named Vuṁda, and *nāga* king Kamaṇḍalu.[115]

The episode is depicted perhaps for the first time. Undoubtedly this is the scene where Buddha is dining and *nāga* ladies are dancing, drinking and celebrating on Buddha arrival at their place. This is a unique carving in monoscenic mode of narration. The second time depiction on the west *toraṇa* also narrates the same story. (Plate 4.39)

River journey of Buddha

According to *Lalitavistara* after taking *pāyasa* from Sujātā, Buddha left Uruvelā, and crossed the river of *nāgas*, reached the river Nairañjanā in the afternoon, and placing the bowl and loin cloth to the side, descended into the river Nirañjanā to cool his limbs. Here, in this scene a boat with lion shaped face of a beaked parrot mouth, and birds and fish shape body is seen, some are holding wooden plank and floating in the river. In the centre of the boat an open cabin with a designed bamboo seat is shown which is empty, one man is holding a *chhatra* and other is holding a flying whisks. River waves can be seen clearly. All the men are wearing a same type of headgear a round ribbon is floating in the air. All persons perhaps are saying goodbye to Buddha as he is going to Uruvelā for attaining the *nirvāṇā*.

One more episode occurred in *Lalitavistara* pertaining to the Journey of river by Buddha, when Buddha is crossing the river Ganga and going to Banaras for turning the "Wheel of Law". He came to the bank of Ganga. At that time river Ganga was flowing at full, level with the banks. Buddha approached to the sailor to cross to the other side. He said, Gautama pay me the fare for crossing," I do not have the fare for crossing, saying thus he crossed from one shore to the other through the aerial path.[116] In *Mahāvastu* Buddha answered the sailor that "The swan on the bank of the Narmadā does not ask leave of the ferryman, but crosses by its own abundant strength and with the words, the Buddha passed over like a king of swans; the great sage crossed the stream and stood on the further bank of Ganga."[117] In this instance, he did not use the boat. It seems in this relief, he is crossing river, *nāga* to reach up to the Uruvelā for attaining enlightenment.

According to Marshall, the boat is carrying the relics of Buddha but it seems erroneous because here no relic casket is seen in the relief. The relic caskets are carved several times at Bharhut and Sanchi in different contexts. Whereas, Col. Cole felt that the relief is depicting a throne of Buddha and he interpreted it as the miraculous crossing of the Ganga by Buddha, when he left Rājagūiha to visit Vaiśālī. [118] It seems that the relief is representing the same episode. This instance of crossing the river Ganga by the Buddha occurred in the *Mahāvastu.*[119] It is mentioned that when Buddha was crossing river Ganga to go to the Vaiśālī from Rājgūha, King Śreṇiya Bimbisāra prepared carefully the road from Rājagūiha to the banks of the Ganga and made it like a chequer-board, level and even, like the palm of the hand.....The exalted one set forth with his company of monks. King Śreṇiya Bimbisāra, with his chariots and troops, his queen, his son, his ministers and his courts, carrying five hundred royal sunshades girt with festoons of fine cloth, with flags and banners flying, in great royal pomp, magnificence and splendor escorted the exalted one on his way to Vaiśālī. ...By the time pontoon bridges had been thrown across the river Ganga, by Bimbisāra, by those from within Vaiśālī by those from without, and by the *nāgas* of the Ganga, the Kambalas and Aśvataras (Two tribes of *nāgas* both mentioned as living at the foot of mount Sineru). Each party saying the exalted one will cross by ours." Gośūingī by the mouth of a parrot invited the Buddha and his company of disciples to a meal on the morrows..... The Buddha stepped on to a bridge of boats. When the Kambalas and the Aśvataras of the Ganga saw the five hundred sunshades of king Bimbisāra and the five hundred sunshades of the people of Vaiśālī, like wise *yakṣas, Cāturmahārājika devas, Sunirmita devas, Paranirmitavaśavartin devas, Maheśvara, Brahmā* each held up five hundred sunshades. The Buddha by his magical power created up as many Buddhas as there were sunshades. Every one thought that "under my sunshade there stands the Buddha. When *devas* saw this magic of Buddha they showered on and over the Buddha, flowers of coral tree, of the *Karkārava* (a species of gourd), *bhīṣma, samantagandha, Pāriyātraka*, flowers of gold and silver, powder of the sandal wood tree and aloe wood tree. All around for six *yojnas* and to the depth of a man's knees there is a flood of celestial sweet-smelling powder.

Perhaps, the relief has depicted either above mentioned episode or the same episode as described above. The parrot beaked boat suggested the invitation of Buddha for morrow's meal by Gośūingī's parrot, which can talks with a human voice. Flowers scattered on the water is the flowers scattered by gods and the men floating in the river are two tribes of nāgas, living at the foot of mount 'Sineru'.

A relief on a pillar from Amravati depict the similar scene depicts a boat in which one man is paddling. A four footed couch with cushions placed on it is also seen. Indexical sign for the sitting Buddha with radiating body represented by a pillar head is represented by *triratna*, more over, the empty seat is also symbolizing the sitting Buddha. A monk is standing in front of the seat, *nāga* king with two ladies and a man wearing round cap are also standing folding hands. On both the sides of the boat are standing the royal persons with attendants holding *chhatra* and flags. According to Fergusson the scene is representing the arrival of relics, in charge of Danta Kumāra, from Ceylon. But to us it is the scene, which is representing the above mentioned instance, because no relic casket is carved here showing the relics of Buddha. In the relief the people from both the side are from Rājagūha and Vaiśālī as Buddha is going Vaiśālī to Rājagūha. Secondly, the *nāga* king and ladies representing the *nāga* tribe who lives at the foot hill of mount Sineru'. Here, the boat is very simply depicted unlike the Sanchi Boat which is majestically carved. However ships are mentioned in the *Ṛgveda, Jātakas*, and *Shilpaśāstras* in which their forms and purposes are described in detail. The Ceylon chronicles and *Jātakas* mentions the ships carrying 800 to 500 people at a time.[120] **(Plate 4.40)**

Three main *Kuṭī* in *Jetavana vihāra*

According to the *Dhammapada* text, Jetavana was situated at a distance of one mile to the south of Śrāvastī. This grove had sweet scented flowers, trees, deer, peacock and birds. *Mahābodhivaṃsa* refers that it was so dear to Buddha that he spends 19 rainy seasons at Jetavana.[121]

The scene is related to the popular *Jetavanavihāra*, It was purchased by banker Anāthapiṇḍikā from the prince Jetā. Purchase of Jetavana, scene is popularly depicted at Bharhut, Bodhgaya and early art of Amaravati. But strikingly, at Sanchi stūpa No. I sculptor chose a different scene to form the same story, three of four popular *Kuṭīs* made by Anāthapiṇḍikā for the use of Buddha. The four main *Kuṭī* known as the *Mahāgaṅdhkuḥi*, Karerimaṇḍala-māla, Kosamba *kuṭī* and Candanamāla in the Jetavanavihāra,

were built by the Anāthpiṇḍikā. In front of the Kosamb *kuṭī* stood a Kosamba tree, near the *Kareri kuṭī* a tree of *Varuṇa* or *Kareri* stood. Here in present relief, only three *kuṭīs* are depicted. Probably in front of each *kuṭī* Anāthpiṇḍikā is standing folded hand facing towards the *kuṭī* and revering Buddha. Here indexical sign for Buddha is empty seat in front of the tree. Near the each *kuṭī* is a tree. At Bharhut names of the two popular *Kuṭī's* occurred 1. *Gaṅdh Kuṭī* and 2. *Kosāṃb Kuṭī.* (Plate 4.41)

Sakka depicted as a popular deity and in more developed iconographic form

Indra was the most popular god in the Vedic period, to whom are devoted one-fourth of total hymns in the *Ṛgveda.* He is described as the wilder of the thunder bolt (*vjra*) and it is with this weapon that he is stated to have crushed and slain *vrtra*, the demon of drought,[122] but gradually he loses his importance in *Purāṇas* and becomes a minor divinity *dikpāla* of the eastern quarter. In the epics he is depicted as a divinity full of passion and helpless against the demons that vanquish him in battle. He rather amasses himself in the dances of the celestial nymphs and interferes with the penance of the sages a nightmare to his suspicious mind. In Sanchi stūpa No.I, Indra or Sakka has been depicted as a popular deity that too in more developed iconography then Bharhut and Bodhgaya and Bhaja. At Bhaja (early 2nd century BCE) Sakka is represented here in the full glory of a king, riding on his mighty Airāvata.[123] The incident of Indra visiting Buddha at *Inrda śail guhā* is very popular among the artist of Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Sanchi. The incident is described in length in *Sakkapañha Suttanta.* [124] Sakka, king of the thirty three, finding it difficult to approach the Buddha who was then in deep meditation, sought the aid of a Gandhabba, heavenly musician, named Pañchaśikha, who by the sweet play of his lyre sang in praise of the Buddha, the truth, the *Arahants* and the love. The Buddha said to Pañchaśikha thus, "the sound of your strings so harmonious with that of your song and the sound of your voice with that of the strings that your lyre does not too much colour your song nor your song too much colour your play." The Buddha being moved by the music, talked with the *Gandhabba*, who, in the course of conversation, informed the Buddha of the advent of Sakka, than Sakka came forward and paid homage to the exalted one. He put to the Buddha several questions mostly dealing with ethics and psychology. Buddha, who as the destroyer of the arrow of desire, answered the questions to the great satisfaction of Sakka, who was later on converted to the Buddhist faith.

At Bharhut he is shown with Pañchaśikha (figure is lost but harp remains are visible) holding harp visiting Buddha at *Indra sāla* cave or *Ida-sāla-guhā* ; as the label attached to it says. The cave is full of sitting devotees and cave is half round in shape, as also found at Bodhgaya.

At Bodhgaya this episode is depicted three times 1. Pañchaśikha sitting out side the cave, is informing Buddha about the arrival of Indra. 2. Indra with Pañchaśikha standing in front of the Buddha. 3. Pañchaśikha holding harp is standing in front of the cave. Here, the figure of Pañchaśikha is bold compared to other scenes. In the all scenes, the cave is half round shaped, rocky terrene is also shown in both the cases but in first scene, a railing in front of the cave is also visible. In another scene Pañchaśikha is standing in front of the cave holding harp. Here cave is encircled with a low railing.

At Sanchi, the incident of *Indra-śaila-guhā is* depicted in a very advanced manner as compared to Bharhut and Bodhgaya. Here the cave is arched shaped as we found at Lomas Ṛṣi cave. Empty seat, is represents Buddha. Wild animals, two lions on the upper part of the relief and on the right side two human faced rams are depicted. At the top of the panel, immediately below the abacus of the capital, the rocks are burning into flames. Coomaraswamy[125] ascribes that the flaming of the mountain is due to the arrival of the gods. But, it seems, that it shows the radiation of enlightened Buddha. Because this episode is also carved on the stele found from Loriyn Tangai, (IMC, dated *circa* 3rd century A.D) where the fire is coming out from a cave occupied only by the Buddha.

Pañchaśikhaś is usually recognised by his harp. Total ten deities are standing in front of the seat. The deity with big headgear in second row, second from the right may be distinguished as Brahmā and on the left of the Pañchaśikha is standing Sakka. This is similar to the one already marked at Bharhut and Sanchi, but interestingly while the depiction of Śyāma *Jātaka* at the end of the story he appears with his one attendant holding *amūta kalaśa* in his right hand, and left hand is raised as if he is giving boon. He wears an elaborate and decorated crown with laterally projecting wings. Again at the end of the Vessantara *Jātaka* he is

depicted without an assistant, this time holding *vajra* in his right hand and *amūta kalaśa* in his left hand. While depicting of seven heavens's, Indra is depicted holding *vajra* in his right hand and *Amūta kalaśa* in his left hand and enjoying the heavenly music and dance. Likewise at stūpa No. III of Sanchi, Indra is sitting on a pedestaled couch holding *vajra* encircled with heavenly nymphs, entertaining him in various ways. Queen Śachi is sitting on comparatively low seat on the left side of Indra.

Thus we have seen how the iconography of Indra developed, who was the most popular Hindu deity of that period. He was so popular deity even in Buddha's time that once upon a time while Buddha residing in the city of Vaiśālī met a Lichchhavi named Mahāli. Mahāli asked the Buddha. Is Sakka, the lord of gods, seen by the blessed one? The Buddha answered in the affirmative. The Buddha further said; "Oh Mahāli, Sakka, the lord of gods, was a young Brāhamaṇa named Magha while he was a man; hence he was called Maghavā. Sakka made charities in the cities while he was a man before; hence he was called Purindada. Sakka, the lord, offered charities, when he was a man; hence he was called Sakka. Sakka the lord of gods, made a gift of shelter while he was a man before; hence he was called Vāsava. Sakka, the lord of gods used to think in a moment of thousands affairs; hence he was called thousand-eyed (*sahassakho*). Sakka the lord of gods had Sujā, the daughter of a demon; hence he was called *Sujāmpati.* Sakka, the lord of gods ruled over the dominion of *Tāvatiṃsa* gods; hence he was called the lord of gods. The seven vows (*Satta vatapadāni*) were observed by Sakka when he was a man before. [126] Yet the *Sakka* is considered to be in low position to Buddha, according to the *Dīgha Nikāya*, all the gods of the Buddhists are inferior to the Buddha. The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* says that though Sakka is the ruler of the gods, he is inferior to a Bhikku (who acquired *arahantship* and was free from the defects of ordinary beings) because he is not free from *rāga*, *doṣa,* and *moha* (passion, hatred and delusion).[127]

Hiuen Tsang while narrating this episode writes, "On one occasion, Buddha was sitting in Indraśailguhā (The cave of the stone of Indra). It has been identified with a peak now called "Giryek". The Śakra took with him his attendant musicians, each one was provided with a five stringed lute, and caused them to sound a strain in the place where Buddha was seated. Then he proposed forty-two questions to Buddha, writing each one of them singly with his finger upon a stone."[128] (Plate 4.42)

Height measuring staff of the Buddha

On the pillar of the northern gateway this depiction has carrying a great meaning. It is indicating the first sign of great change; iconic form of Buddha, which occurred in the later times. As inscription also attached with this depiction shows (*Kākaṇāye Bhagavato pamāṇa laṭhi*) it is some thing very important which was depicted for the first time perhaps in the history of Buddhist art, if it is not presented in the lost remains of stūpa of Bharhut. Legends about the Buddha's height is mentioned in the Buddhaghoṣa's *Sumaṅgala-Vilāsinī* [129]

It is a vertical depiction in which a *triratna* is carved above which a *chhatra* is placed with garlands on either side of it. Below this, lotus flower with the *nāgapuṣpa* (Honey suckle motif) are arranged vertically and forming a staff.

On the either side of this staff different type of necklace including *aṣtmaṅgalaka māla* are hanging on the *nāgadant* or elephant's tooth. Below this staff is a pair of feet of Buddha. This depiction is actually showing the standing Buddha. Previously only sitting Buddha in aniconic form is depicted by the sculptors but now he wanted to show Buddha in standing postures. This depiction shows the emerging strong waves of Mahāyāna pantheon of Buddhism in which they strongly wished to worship the Buddha in human form. But because of the one or the other reasons, the sculptor still could not carve the Buddha in iconic form. For the first time they tried to carve the standing Buddha in aniconic form.

An inscription on east, west, south *toraṇa* reads[130] thus, "He who dismantles or causes to be dismantled, an arch or a rail of this Kākaṇāva, or causes it to be transferred to another church (*Ācharyia Kula*) shall incur the sin of the murderers of mothers, father, and Arhats, of those who create schism in the community, and of those who cause bloodshed.... all such sinners (shall live in dirt)." The text goes as follows:-

1. *[yo] ito kāksṇā[vā] to toraṇa vedika vā*
2. *upāḍā[peyā]vā ānaṁ vā Ācariya-kulaṁ*
3. *saṁkāmeyā so ma-*

4. *ti-ghātina piti-ghātina*
5. *arahaṁta-ghātina*
6. *rudhir-upāyakāna sa-*
7. *gha-bhe (dina).....te du. cita...*
8. *nasa pāpā*
9. *kārina sav[e] ma paṭipae*).

The epigraph supplies a number of information that Sanchi was in the hands of the *Theravādins* and that by the 1st century BCE other rival schools were also emerged in this region. In the 3rd century BCE Aśoka also felt this problem and engraved edict at the pillars at Sarnath, Sanchi and Kauśāmbī for its suppression. The problem of schism became so serious in later period that the Theravādins even feared of dismantling their sacred edifices, engraved inscription to threat the rival sects.

This inscription suggests the growing power of Mahāyāna over Hinayāna traits but still have a great hold on *Saṁgha*, who believes in the teachings of Buddha, but not in worship of iconic form of Buddha.

Interestingly, this type of depiction is also found at Amaravati. In this depiction Buddha is shown in the form of a pillar though not uniform, narrows at the top; broader from the lower part, on the top a *triratna* indicating the head of the Buddha and pair of a foot represents Buddha *pāda*. The pillar is radiating indicates the brighten body of enlightened Buddha. Other monks are following Buddha and Buddha is shown taller in comparison to other monks.

Traits of early Buddhism, which is considered by renunciation, austerity and a very severe monastic cods; with the emergence of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, now changed into form of *bhakti* which now includes the prayers, offerings, donations for erecting Buddhist religious places, devotional dance, music which was slowly adopted by Buddhism from the emerging waves of *bhakti* revolution, which found its culmination when sculptor of Mathura carved its first Bodhisattva figure in Stone. (Plate 4.43)

Summary

According to M.C. Joshi,[131] "In this great project, the sculptural art attains refinement in the treatment of figures, and improves figural arrangement with fewer carvings on the railing unlike Bharhut. The panels however, continue to be crowded but the feminine figure in śālabhanjikās becomes more charming."

1. The carvings are no longer flat, as most of the reliefs shows at Bharhut, but projected, being done in high relief, and the compositions are more crowded. This results in a shady background, from which the figures stand out more clearly in the day light. The sculptor of Sanchi gave more attention to carve even minute details.

2. Unlike the Sanchi Stūpa No. II, which carried its sculptures, carved on the railing of Bharhut, which had its sculptures carved on the railing and *toraṇa*, coping and *sūchī*, the railing, *sūchī*, coping of the Sanchi stūpa No. I are left uncarved; But the four *toraṇas* of Sanchi stūpa No.I are profusely carved.

3. At Bharhut, in rectangular composition sculptor mainly made a border of palm tree with its beautiful leaves, and fluted pillar with Kumrahar type pillar capital. A Sanchi sculptor carved designed flowers and creeper boarder, fluted pillar with animals sitting back to back or *paśu saṅghāṭa* (as we found in western caves), pillar with *ghaṭa* shaped base. (Plate 4.44)

4. Sculptures of God Kāma are few in early Indian sculptures. Scholars on Brahmanical iconography and mythology for example T.A. Gopinatha Rao,[132] P. Thomas, J. N. Banerjea, Alain Danielou, D. N. Shukla, N. P. Joshi and others make no mention of any independent figural representation of this god in early sculpture. In early Buddhist art sculptors had been depicted Māra in the scenes of temptation.[133] At Bharhut, only at one place Māra is depicted in grief, scratching the surface with a pointed stick, But at Sanchi, Māra with his army is depicted in a very elaborate manner. In one place, on an architrave where Buddha is depicted renouncing the worldly life, on similar architrave, near the scroll is depicted Māra as Kāma and his wife Rati also depicted for the first time. Kāma is holding arrows and Rati is holding bow. Holding each others hand, they are beautifully depicted. Due to the presence in forest, the elephants are going crazy and destroying tress in excitement. Marshall has identified them as forest people, but to us the couple is none other then Kāma and Rati in cheerful manner, wearing crown and jewelry, floral

bow is held by Rati and Kāma is having five arrows (*pañchaśara*) The bow held by Rati is floral. His other name is Manmatha, Pradyumna and Māra which is his famous name in Buddhist mythology.[134] It is imperative to mention here that Kāma is popularly known as Māra or Pāpimā (the "wicked one") in the Buddhist texts, he is closely associated with the god of desire and love, Kāma.He is not evil as such, but does embody delusion and therefore blocks the path towards realization.[135]

V.S. Agrawala identified a standing male figures in a fragmentary terracotta plaque of Mathura, (GMM, No. 2552) as Kāmdeva, Indian god of love who carries a long bow in his left hand and a sheaf of arrows in the right, as early as 1934, He ascribed its date of the Kuṣāṇa period. Two terracotta figures were further described by M.M. Nagar.[136] In first terracotta, Kāma is holding a sheaf of five arrows. A terracotta plaque (GMM, No. 2257) also identified as Kāmadevatā in which a young god is carrying a sheaf of five arrows in his right hand. **(Plate 4.45)**

A Plague from Sonkh dated post Śuṅga to pre Kuṣāṇa period depicts the same god holding bunch of five arrows in the right hand.[137]

A unique stone plaque dateable to Śuṅga period from Mathura Museum, No. 18-1448 showing a standing god with a bunch of five arrows rose aloft in his right hand while the left is placed akimbo. According to Prithvi Kumar Agrawala.[138] It is "perhaps the earliest stone sculpture piece so far known of independent Kāma devatā figure, the artist thought simply the attribute of *punch-śara* or five arrows to suffice as the distinguishing mark of the god's image.

It can be said that, here the God Kāma is depicted with Rati holding arrows in one hand perhaps for the first time in Indian sculptural art.

Another figure of Kāma *deva* may be identified in the depiction of descent of Buddha from the *Trayastriṁśa* Heaven. He is standing near the ladder holding sheaf of arrows in one hand and in another hand he is holding a bouquet of flowers. It is well known that he resided in one of the heaven i.e. *Kāmāvacharas*. He is seen here standing beside the ladder, according to the iconography he is holding the arrows in his right hand and bouquet in the left hand instead of bow made of flowers. The depiction of Kāma *deva* twice on the Sanchi *toraṇa* suggests that it was a popular deity of that time Jain literature *Antagadadasāo* and *Bhagavati* mentions a shrine called *Kāma mahā vana*, situated at Banaras. It was perhaps dedicated to the god of love or Kāma *deva*.[139]

5. The stories represented are *Jātakas*, episodes from the life of the Buddha and other Buddhist events. The scenes are carved on the architraves, As the sculptors had more horizontal space for carving. Jambs of the *toraṇas* in rectangular partitions also provided more sufficient space for the carver to depict narrations elaborately. Sufficient surface for carving proved to be more suitable for continuous narration than the round medallions at Bharhut.

6. The stories are told in an easy and cheerful way with all the minute details recorded. The love of artist is centered on all the details of the material world. There is nothing in contemporary life that escapes his observation, from the life of the court, with its festive and military pageants, in palaces and fortified cities, down to the humble country life with its simple occupation and huts. We are thus made familiar with life of ancient India. These aspects are lacking in the art of Bharhut, Bodhgaya and other stūpas at Sanchi.

7. The representation of the individual figures shows progress over the Bharhut sculptures. The different parts of the human body form a more harmonious entity, and the movements are more natural. The animal forms display an acute observation of nature, together with a deep feeling for the animal own life. Varieties of beasts and birds, together with a luxurious vegetation of tree and flowers, give these carvings an unusual beauty. At Sanchi, is definitely advance in sculptural technique and treatment compared to Bharhut, variation in date, style, and iconography are easily observed. Thus at Sanchi, Indra appeared wearing elaborate crown.

8. The proportion of the figures at Sanchi is still heavy. It is very much later at Amravati and Nagarjunakonda that the figures assume light and graceful contours. However, one cannot be deeply impressed by the dexterousness of the Sanchi sculptures in modeling, even at this stage.[140]

9. *Yakṣa* guardians of the gateway, large in scale, recall similar ones at Bharhut. At Sanchi, occurs the motif of the *yakṣa* with a lotus issuing from his naval, a motif that survived for several centuries with splendid examples in Gupta art. The animal studies, especially elephants and horses are delightful.

10. The graceful and elaborate foliage and flower designs remind us of the art of the jewelers. It possesses features of its own which marks it unique as a distinct type. Nowhere, in India we found such floral designs, so richness and variety in men and animals, so much of decorative beauty in stone is appreciating.

11. The voluptuous figures are beautifully done and the contours of the body are an atomically perfect. The intention of sculptor is to depict life as it is. Sculptors have displayed their genius in depicting the stories of Buddhism. Though they have assimilated the northern style and some classical motifs, their marvelous sense of decorative beauty is unmistakable, also their higher academic skill within whose limits set by conventions they have drawn easily, freely, skillfully and realistically.

12. Here, it may be mentioned, that in the sculptural art of Sanchi, Mathura and Bodhgaya the western influence can be seen on the animals, mythical animals, and decorative motifs but not on the facial and anatomical features of human beings. In short, the western art could affect only decorative motifs and animals. Carvings of men and women figures remained unaffected. They were carved in purely Indian manner. Except some of the foreigner, porously drawn for example foreigner worshiping the stūpa.

13. At Bharhut the sculptor carved the Buddhist themes, and other incidents related to the life of Buddha in the medallion, copings or on the railing pillars in square relief separated by the design of railing, for example Ajātśatru pillar in contrast to Sanchi sculptor has carved the life scenes of Buddha with other related subjects on the *toraṇa* pillars in square reliefs separated by railing design and on architraves.

14. At Sanchi, sculptors have given more stress on carving of Buddha's life incidents rather than depicting the *Jātaka's* like at the Bharhut stūpa. Moreover, the popular kings who gave the patronage to Buddhism are duly depicted. Depiction of Aśoka's time is seen on the Sanchi stūpa No. II and then afterward on the pillar of stūpa No. I. This is the only site where all the miracles performed by the Buddha are depicted in a peculiar manner in which some of the relief shows big drums beaten by the gods in order to praise the Buddha after the performance of miracle.

15. Applying the floral motifs and creepers in most stylised manner is the great achievement of the Sanchi sculptor. Lotus flowers are carved for the first time in a deep cutting method on the lower side of architraves. Creepers are diligently carved to fill up the gapes, in a very sophisticated manner. Reason for carving such floral and creeper designs seems to the guidelines of the Buddha which he had given in *Dasa Dhamma Sutta.* In which he says," Beauty is nothing to me. Neither the beauty of the body nor that comes of dress." The Brethren were forbidden to allow the figures of men and women to be painted on monastery walls, and were permitted only representations of wreaths and creepers. [141]

16. Compared to the Bharhut sculptures Sanchi sculptures are wearing less jewelry, especially the necklace wore by the men and women is reduced from three strings to one string (ékāvalī). **(Plate 4.46)**

17. At Sanchi *nāgapuṣpa* or honeysuckle motif took a new form. Unlike the simple form carved on the abacus of the Aśokan pillar, at Bharhut and Sanchi stūpa No. II, its shape now changed, the petals are replaced by beaked mouth; winged lion, standing, facing each other between a central petal emerging from lotus making the shape of honeysuckle motif and secondly two men holding sword in one hand and a box or plate in other hand standing face to face in between the central petal emerging from lotus. Two composite form of *Nagapuṣpa* is separated by a stem in a rounded zigzag pattern. A surprise change can be seen in the carving of *Nāgapuṣpa* which was the favorite flower/pattern to be carved by the sculptor since the time of Aśoka. **(Plate 4.47)**

18. At Sanchi, a number of sculptures are carved front facing. At Sanchi stūpa No. II the sculptor faced difficulties in carving of front facing sculptures. Here front facing sculptures are carved with every detailes

which was not necessary to depict, for example an elephant with a rider is carved with the depiction of its four legs, tail in between its legs creats a funny scene. Wheras, a winged lion is depicted with its four legs and wings looks like side facing and sculptor did not forget to carve a tail. But At Sanchi the problem is solved; front facing sculptures were carved with there frontal portion only and not with the part which can not be seen while facing front. **(Plate 4.48)**

19. And last but not the least the *toraṇas*, stūpas, *chaityas* and *vedikās* of Sanchi serve as prototypes for the early Mathura school of art of early Kuṣāṇa period.

20. The sculptor had now handled the stone with ease, even ivory, wood and metal workers carved the scupltures perfectionaly, archiac phase had now over and the figures no longer experience the inflexible frontality.

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CHAPTER 5

Beginning of Mathura Art

Introduction

Mathura, situated on the bank of river Yamuna at a distance of 58 km. to the north-west of Agra and 145 to south-east of Delhi, between latitude 27° 14' and 27° 58' N and longitude 77 ° 17' and 78 ° 12 E, Mathura district covers an area of about 3800 sq.km. and forms a part of the Yamuna basin. It has been a cradle of several important developments as narrated in the epic, *Mahābhārata*. It is more famous as the birth-place of Kṛṣṇa.[1] But for an art historian it has a great importance due to its sculptural art style known as the "Mathura school of art". For art creation, Mathura was proved as heaven for sculptor, where for a long time it served as most fertile land for making the stone sculptures and exports them to distant places. Here in this school of art, Indian plastic art reached its zenith. During the period under consideration not only the Buddhist art, but art of other pantheons took a vital turn, which is marked by the gradual transformation of symbols into anthropomorphic forms, the emergence of deities and their pantheons and interaction and independent use of the alien trends.

Historical/political background of Mathura

On the basis of the archaeological remains the antiquity of this region goes back to 10th century BCE.[2] *Rāmāyaṇa* also mentioned that after Madhu's (demon who is said to have founded the city Mathura) death the region was governed by his son Lavaṇa; who was powerful like his father demon Madhu. Later, the place was conquered by Śatrughana, younger brother of Rāma.[3]

As said earlier, it is popularly known for the birth place of Lord Kṛṣṇa. According to some legends lot of honey was collected in its forests hence its name was Madhubana or forest of honey. Its other names are Madhurā, Madhupurī, Madhuṣikā, Madhupghanā, Madhuban and Mathulā or Mathura.[4]

The political history of Mathura can be traced back from 5th century BCE, when it was the capital of the Śūrasena or Śūrasenakas an ancient Kṣatriya clan. A site called 'Surasena' was identified by late Dr. K.L. Ansari in the Agra district.[5] Though the Śūrasenas is not named in Vedic literature, their neighbors in the west, the Matsyas, are named, and the epic genealogy connects the Śūrasenas with the Yadus and the Satvatas, mentioned in the *Ṛgveda* and the Bāhmaṇas respectively.[6] It is also mentioned that the Kurukṣetra, Matsya, Pāñchāla and Śūrasenakā are called the land of the *Brahmaūṣis*, they are inferior to *Brahmavartam* in respect of sanctity[7]. In *Mahābhārata* [8] some places mentions the name Śūrasena besides Mathura.

In the Pali tradition, it is know as Madhurā, the capital of Surasena, on the banks of Yamuna. Its king, after the death of Bimbisara, was Abantiputta.[9] Madhurā is generally referred to in the Pali literature as Uttara Madhrā, probably to distinguish it from the second Madhurā, in the distant south was also known. It is mentioned in the *Vimānavatthu* commentary, a women of this place was born in the thirty second heaven in the pretext of given alms to lord Buddha.[10] The *Ghaṭa-Jātaka* mentions about a king named Mahāsagara of Uttara-Madhurā.[11] Generally it is assumed, that Buddha never visited Mathura but *Aṅguttara Nikāya* refers, that the Buddha once visited the city, due to its five great defects, became annoyed with the city.

"*Pañchame Bhikhave āninabā Madhurāyāṁ-Katme Pañcha? Visamā Bahurajā chaṇḍasunakhā valayekkha*

dullavhapiṇḍā Ime kho Bhikkhave pañcha Āninavā madhurāyanti".

Buddha did not receive warm welcome. It relates that in Mathura, "the ground is uneven; It is dusty; there are fierce dogs; bestial *yakṣas*; and difficult to get alms."[12] Buddhaghoṣa in his *Manorathapurāni* tells us, that once the lord, with the monks arrived at Mathura and was entering the *antonagara* of Mathura, when a naked and vicious looking *yakṣiṇī*, barred his way, by stretching her arms on both sides, to show her contempt, began to laugh uproariously with hanging tongue. Buddha was disgusted, did not enter the *antonagara*, but remained out side it, from where the citizens came, and fed the lord as well as the monks. Later on, the situations were changed and became more favorable to Buddhists therefore in the second visit Buddha appreciated the city. The text *Divyāvadāna.*[13] mentions the city and the Buddha's forecast that "the place will emerge into a big city". After that it became a part of the Magadhan Empire under the suzerainty of Nanda kings and than Maurya kings.

Archaeological excavations conducted at Sonkh and other sites in and around the city of Mathura reveal that before the Mauryan period Mathura was a small township. It was during the Mauryan period when the Mathura gained importance and started immerging as a town ship.[14] Aśoka's spiritual teacher/adviser Upagupta, also belonged to Mathura.[15]According to Hiuen Tsang, number of stūpas were built by Aśoka along the bank of the river Yamuna.[16] After the Mauryas, the Śuṅgas ruled the city of Mathura. The city had a prosperous time under the Śuṅga dynasty. Patañjali a commentator on the *Aṣtādhyāyi*,[17] records the prosperity of the city in 2nd century BCE and refers that the people of Mathura were more happy and good looking than the people of Sāṅkāśya and Pāṭalīputra.

During the Indo-Greek period, the *Milindapañho* [18] refers to Mathura as one of the principal cities of India. The numerous inscriptions and *Āyāgapaṭṭas* recovered from Kankali Tila mound testify that from 2nd century BCE on wards it was an important center of Jainism. The Jain image inscriptions are also significant for the fact that they are referred to various local persons and their professions-caravan leader, perfumer, banker, metalworker, treasures, etc. Mathura was also a noted centre of the *Bhāgavata* and the *nāga* cults. During 2nd century BCE *Yavana* king is said to have attacked the city of Mathura, the incident is described in *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, *Gārgī Saṁhitā*, and in *Puraṇas*[19] (*Mārkaṇḍeya-Mathurāṁ ca purīṁramyāṁ*), *Yuga Purāṇa*[20] records;

ततः साकेतमाक्रम्य पाञ्चाला [न्] माथुरांस्तथा ।

यवनाश्च सुविक्रान्ताः प्राप्स्यन्ति कुसुमध्वजम् ॥

During the early centuries of the Christian era it became an important centre of culture, commercial and religious activities. It was located at the junction of many important trade routes. Several roads emerging from Mathura, ultimately joined the two important highways of ancient India namely *Uttarāpatha* and *Dakṣiṇāpatha.*[21] *Uttarāpatha* trade route sprang up in the famous port of Tāmraliptī of the Bay of Bengal, and passed through the ancient cities of Pāṭalīputra, Sāketa, Kauśāmbī, Mathura, Indraprastha, Rohītaka, Pṛithūdaka (Pehova), Sunetra (near Ludhiyana), Jālandhara, Śākala and Takṣaśilā.[22] The city was also famous for the fine quality of cotton cloth; as informed by Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra.*[23]

Patañjali speaks of its kettledrums, garments and coins or *Kārṣāpaṇas.* Megasthenes refers to Methora in the country of the 'Surasenoi'.[24] The Paurāṇic literature including *Harivaṁsa*,[25] *Viṣnu*, *Matsya*, *Bhāgavata*,[26] *Varāha*,[27] *Brahmavaivarta* and *Padma*[28] is also full of references to the Mathura region. The Buddhist texts like *Vinaya piṭaka*,[29] *Aṅguttaranikāya*,[30] *Dīghanikāya*, *Divyāvadāna, Lalita-vistara, Majjhimnikāya*,[31] *Avdāna Kalpalatā*,[32] etc. also mentioned the city of Mathura. Number of Jain texts like *Sūtra-chūrṇi*, *Āvaśyaka churṇi*,[33] *Yaśatilaka champū*,[34] *Vividhatirthakalpa*,[35] *Bṛhatkathā Kośa*, *Rāyapaseṇīya Sutta* have mentioned Mathura as an important city. The *Āvaśyaka churio* presents Mathura as a great commercial city. Megasthenes, the Selucid envoy to the court of Chandra Gupta Maurya wrote about the city of Mathura in his book *Indica.* Ptolemy has called the city of Modoura as a "city of Gods". These literary sources amply testify that Mathura was both a religious centre and an important centre for trade and commerce. It lay at the junction of two important Indian trade-routes; one which travelled from the northwest to the Ganga valley and their bifurcations towards west India from Mathura itself.[36]

Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsang, two distinguished Chinese travelers, visited India in the CE 5th and 7th century respectively. They also visited Mathura which was duly mentioned in their writings. Hiuen Tsang mentioned,

Mathura as important religious city. He had stated that "The kingdom of Mo-t'u-lo is about 5000 li in circuit. The capital is 20 li round. The soil is rich and fertile, and fit for producing grains....There are about twenty *Saṅgharāmas* with 2000 priests or so. They study equally the great and the little vehicles. There are five *Deva* temples, in which sectaries of all kinds live. There are three stūpas built by Aśoka-*rājā*....There are very many traces of the four past Buddhas here. There are also stūpas to commemorate the remains of the holy followers of Śākya *Tathāgata*, of Sāriputra, of Mudgalāputra, of Purnamaitrayaniputra, of Upāli, of Ānanda, of Rāhula, of Manjuśri and stūpas of other Bodhisattva. Every year, during three months, when long fasts are observed, and during the six fast days of each month, the priest resorted various stūpas and pay mutual compliments, they make their religious offerings, and bring many rare and precious objects to present. According to their school, they visit the sacred objects of their veneration. Those who study the *Abhidharama,* honour Sāriputra; those who practice meditation, honour Mudgalaputra; those who recite the *sūtras* honour Purnamaitrayaniputra; those who study the *Vinaya* reverence Upāli. All the Bhikṣunis honour Ānanda, the *śramaneras* honour Rāhula; those who study the great Vehicle reverence the Bodhisattvas. On these days they honour the stūpas with offerings. They spread out their jeweled banners; the rich (precious) coverings (parasols) are crowded to gather as network; the smoke of incense rises in clouds; and flowers are scattered in every direction like rain; the sun and the moon are concealed by the clouds which hang over the moist valleys. The king of the country and the great ministers engage themselves to these religious duties with great zeal".[37]

"To the east of the city, about 5 or 6 li we come to a mountain *Saṅgharāmas.* The hill-sides are pierced (widened) to make cells. We enter it through a valley, by gates. This was constructed by the honorable Upagupta. There is a stūpa containing the nail-parings of the *Tathāgata*.... Twenty-four or five li to the south-east of the stone house there is a great dry marsh, by the side is a stūpa. In older days the *Tathāgata* used to walk to and fro in this place. During this time, incident of offering honey to Buddha by a monkey occurred. Buddha ordered to mix honey in water and distribute all present in the assembly. It is so said once a monkey fell down in a hole and died, due to power of his religious merit he was born as man.... The *Tathāgata*, when in the world, often traversed this country preaching the law. On the places where he stopped there are monuments with titles on him."[38]

In the 2nd century BCE it was in the control of Mitra rulers. Number of coins of Gomitra, Sūryamitra, (*Raño Suyamitasa,* silver coin, 124.5 grams.), Viṣnumitra and others unearthed of this period from Mathura or nearby places of Mathura. [39] Mathura is situated on an important trade route which connects central India to North West. In the *Vinaya* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādins Jīvaka* is represented as taking a journey from Taxila to Bhadraṁkara, Udumbara, Rohitaka and Mathura.[40]

Already, important developments were taking place in the Punjab and in the north-western frontier regions from the early second century BCE to the CE third century. The whole period is characterized by invasions from the north-west, the influx of foreign (Greek, Parthian, central Asian) elements and the establishment of a great dynasties of foreign or semi-foreign rulers in various regions of northern and western India.

In the 1st century BCE Mathura came under the Kṣatrapas headed by Rājuvula and Śoḍāṣa. The earliest known members of this family were Hagāna and Hagāmaśa who appear to have for some time ruled jointly. Our information regarding two Satraps of Mathura is derived from the famous Lion Capital of that place. We get the names of Rājuvula whose title was Mahākṣtrapa. From his coins we find that he assumed the title of King of Kings. He was succeeded by his son Śoḍāṣa. He was a Kṣatrapa during his father's time. His accession may be dated back to CE 15. His reign was short and unimportant, so no important traces of Kṣatrapa rulers are available.[41]

After Kṣatrapa rule, Datta dynasty was having its hold over Mathura.[42] In the beginning of the Christian era Northern India provided the panoramic backdrop for a series of evolutions in history and sculptural art. In the later part of CE 1st century, it became an important place and head quarter of Kuṣāṇas in Kaniṣka's reign. It was most prosperous city during the reign of Kaniṣka, Vāsiṣka, Huviṣka and Vāsudeva. The art activities including the carving of stone sculptures reached its zenith during this period. After the death of Vāsudeva in CE 176. the *nāga* kings also ruled here for some time.

Campaigns/Excavations/Findings

The city of Mathura is situated almost on an archaeological mound. The important mounds and sites are Katra Keshavadeva, Jamalpur, Kankali Tila, Chaurasi, Palikhera, Maholi, Saptarshi, Gokarneshwara, Isapur, Mohaban, Vrindaban, Anyore, Sonkh and Gobindanagar. Several mounds have been found scattered in the area of ten square miles including the city. Many of these mounds contained the art treasures/antiquities. Kankali mound, Bhuteshvara mound, Jamalpur or Jail mound and Saptarshi mound have already proved their importance in this regard. These are locally known as 'Tila'. Besides these Tila's many of the wells and the river also have given shelter to a number of antiquities/art objects. During the past invasions, especially of the Muslims, Sculptures were occasionally thrown in these places with a view to save them from being polluted by the invaders. There was great loss on Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical monuments due to repeated attacks by Muslim invaders, resulted as a great loss to the glory of Mathura.[43]

For the first time, in the year 1836; Colonel L.R. Stacy found a stone sculpture from Mathura, representing bacchanalian scene.[44] He also found sculpture showing a lady standing on a dwarf and patting a bird in a cage and on the reverse side is depicted subjugation of Nalagiri by Buddha.

Sir Alexander Cunningham visited the site in the year 1853 and discovered a portion of railing near Katra mound, which depicts a lady under the tree. He acquired number of sculptures and inscriptions from Katra Keshavadeva. In the year 1860 Jamalpur Mound was levelled for building collector's court house. From this site the remains of a temple of serpent deity Dadhikarṇa and also the Huviṣka monastery. This excavation yielded a rich collection of sculptures, pillars, architectural fragments, railing pillars besides other antiquities.[45] Two pillar capitals were found from Katra site.[46]

In the year 1862 he found some part of Buddhist railing and gateway.[47] He also found a standing image of Buddha belonging to Gupta period. The discovery of such an important image suggests that the site of Katra was under the control of the Buddhists till the end of the CE sixth century.

During the construction work near Jamalpur mound, numerous architectural fragments and sculptures were unearthed.[48] The most remarkable find from the site of Jamalpur is life size image of the Buddha indeed an out standing creation of the Mathura art. (GMM. No. A. 54)

Bhagwan Lal Indraji found a lion capital with a Kharoṣṭhī inscription in the year 1869. The inscription records, building of a Buddhist monastery by queen Kambojikā, wife of Kṣatrapa King Rājuvula at Saptarshi. The capital datable to the 1st century BCE was deposited in British Museum, London. Cunningham excavated many mounds at Chaubara, where he found one golden casket and another steatite casket.[49]

In the year 1871 Cunningham excavated Kankali Tila and Chaubara Tila situated at a distance of about half a mile to the south of Katra Kesavadeva. At Kankali Tila he recovered the remains of the famous 'Vodva' stūpa. It was at this place that Cunningham discovered the inscribed images of the Jaina *Tīrthaṅkara* ranging in dates from the year 5 to 19 of the Śaka era and from the neighbouring spot Bhuteshvara found a large rail post, shows a lady with umbrella and a medallion depicting a strange scene of an eye ward of an animal hospital.[50]

The Chaubara mound was possibly one of twelve stūpas. From one of the small mounds there came out a Buddhist relic (golden) casket was found, this was in the possession of F. S. Growse.[51] Cunningham opened another mound and discovered, in its centre a steatite relic casket, which is now in the Indian Museum, Kolkata.

During the excavations at Chaubara mound, Cunningham and F.S. Growse found colossal Buddha figure (GMM, No. A.27), a pedestal of the Buddha image records the 33rd year in the reign of Huviṣka (SML, No. B.2) and a rail post depicting Ṛṣyaśūḍga. (GMM, No. J.7)

Dr. A Fuhrer initiated excavations at Kankali Tila and unearthed several important Jain antiquities and stone sculptures in the year 1888 to 1891. This resulted in the discovery hundreds of images and architectural fragments, mostly Jain in character and ranging in age from about 2nd century BCE to the CE 12th century. The findings at the site proved the existence of at least two Jaina stūpa. V.A. Smith published a monograph of the excavated antiquities titled *Stūpa and other Antiquities from Mathura*, published from Allahabad, in 1910.[52]

In the year 1909 Rai Bahadur pt. Radhakrishna, started collection of antiquities and sculptures and later he started

excavation at Mat where he unearthed royal portrait figures of Vima Kadphises, Kaniṣka and Chaṣṭna. He also added about 600 sculptures through his vigorous campaigns of cleaning the well in Mathura and adjoining region.[53]

In the year 1953, M. Venkataramayya and Ballabh Saran of Archaeological Survey of India, excavated at Katra mound; revealed a cultural sequence ranging from circa 600 BCE to CE and unearthed antiquities like terracotta, beads, seals and potteries which includes Painted Grey Ware.[54] Prof. Harbert Härtel, Director of Indian Art Museum, Berlin and Professor in Freien University excavated the mound at Sonkh from 1966 to 1974. During the excavation, remarkable antiquities were unearthed includes Brahmanical and *nāga* shrines belonging to Pre-Kuṣāṇa and Kuṣāṇa period, and a complete cultural sequence of Mathura, copper and silver coins of different kings of Mathura.[55]

With a view to reassess the antiquity and nature of early settlement at Mathura, B. K. Thapar and M. C. Joshi of the Archaeological Survey of India conducted excavations for four seasons from 1973 to 1977 at Mahavidya, Chamunda, Hathi Tila, Ambarisha and Kankali Tila. Antiquities from the sites includes terracottas of the Mauryan and the Śuṅga period, brick tank of the Kuṣāṇa period etc.[56] It is to be noted, during these excavations Painted Grey Ware at Mathura could be found in stratified context at only one site ie. Ambarish Tila. As a result of the excavations sequence of following cultural period was brought into light.

(a) Period I : From circa 6th century BCE to closing decades of the 4th century BCE (Hamlet of PGW using people)

(b) Period II : From closing decades of the 4th century BCE to circa 2nd century BCE (Extensive settlement fortified by a massive mud wall which was planned as an oblong-crescent with river Yamuna on the east as a protective boundary)

(c) Period III : From circa 2nd century BCE till the end of the 1st century BCE. The mud fortification had lost its utility in this period, but the size of the settlement remained the same as during the early period. A notable feature of this period was the foundation of a Jain establishment at Kankali Tila out side the mud fortification in the later part of this period.

(d) Period IV : From the beginning of the CE 1st century till the CE 3rd century. (During this period {Śaka-Kuṣāṇa age} the mud fortification was not only revived, enlarged and repaired but an inner fortification or high-walled enclosure, now represented by long elevated earthen pile in Katra area, was also constructed)

(e) Period V : From CE 4th century till the end of CE 6th century (It flourished mainly as a centre of art and crafts and religious establishments but lost importance from point of view of political-cultural centre.

The chronology of Mathura on the basis of archaeological excavations proved that it has endless cultural continuity ever since the first settlement was founded here.[57]

During the levelling of the mound for the constructions of colonies at Govindnagar a large number of Buddhist sculptures were found in the year 1976. The antiquities are now in the Mathura Museum.[58]

Apart from the excavations and findings during levelling of mounds, during the digging of Delhi-Agra highway, large antiquities were noticed, it included architectural fragments, doorjambs coping stones, mainly of Kuṣāṇa period. (GMM, No. 57. 4446 to 4448)

Chronology of Mathura art

Before we proceed further describing of the Buddhist art of Mathura it is essential to present the chronology of Mathura art. Sir Johan Marshall has recognised three main classes of pre-Kuṣāṇa sculptures at Mathura. The earliest belong to the 2nd century BCE, the second to the 1st century BCE and the last associated with the rule of the local Kṣatrapa.[59] V.S. Agrawala has also given an idea of the relative chronology of Mathura art.[60]

Following order has been given by him:

1. Maurya period, 325 BCE to 184 BCE.
2. Śuṅga period, 184 BCE to 72 BCE. [61]
3. Satraps of Mathura (earlier written as Muttra), circa 100 BCE to 57 BCE.
   (a) Satraps Hagān and Hagāmaśa.
   (b) Rājuvula.

(c) Śoḍāsa, circa 81 BCE.

(d) Ghaṭāka.

4. Revival of the Śuṅgas at Mathura, 57 BCE to circa 20 BCE King Gomitra and Viṣnumitra, etc.

5. Kuṣāṇas, CE 1 to CE 176.

(a) King Kuṣāṇa or Kadaphises I, CE 1 to CE 40.

(b) Vima or Kadaphises II, CE 40 to CE 77.

(c) Kaniṣka, CE 78 to CE 101. (The Saka era of CE 78 was discovered by Kaniṣka who struck coins only under the title of 'Soter Megas'. The Kuṣāṇa emperor who styles himself as Kaniṣka on the coin was Kaniṣka II) [62]

(d) Vāṣiska, CE 102 to CE 105.

(e) Huviṣka, CE 106 to CE 138.

(f) Vāsudeva, CE 138 to CE 176.

6. Guptas, CE 320 to CE 500.

7. Early medieval period, CE 600 to CE 900.

8. Late medieval period, CE 900 to CE 1200.

Here, I have tried to discus the Buddhist art of Mathura from Mauryan period till Kuṣāṇa period covering from 3rd century BCE to CE 2nd century or more precisely from 325 BCE to CE 176 For the easy discussion of the Buddhist art of Mathura, I have divided this period into three groups;

Firstly, from the Maurya period to Śuṅga period: Period of Emergence

Secondly, Satraps period to Vima Kadaphises i.e. circa 100 BCE to CE 77 Transitional Phase

Thirdly, period of Maturity i.e. From Kaniṣka CE 78 to Vāsudava CE 178 Period of Maturity

The richness of Mathura art can be well imagined by the large number of sculptures (more than ten thousand) [63] unearthed during the excavation or by the chance discovery. Now these sculptures are housed mainly in the state Museum Mathura and Lucknow. The hoard of sculptures found at Mathura proves its richness of sculptural art in ancient India.

Vogel rightly observed that "The vast amount of sculptural remains discovered at Mathura would be sufficient to show the importance of this place in the history of Indian Art. The great flourishing period of the Mathura school undoubtedly coincides with the reign of the great Kuṣāṇa rulers, Kaniṣka, Huviṣka and Vāsudeva... that the Mathura school existed even during the Gupta period which is attested by some inscribed Buddha image." [64]

Mathura has witnessed carving of stone sculptures as early as Mauryan period. The earliest statue of the Parkham *Yakṣa* belongs to 3rd century BCE due to its stylistic and inscriptional grounds. Its style is purely indigenous. These types of *yakṣa* statue were widely found in the different parts of the country.

In the 1st century BCE during the time of Kṣatrapas, art activities remained continuous. The inscribed Lion capital (now in British Museum, London) and Amohini tablet (SML) are the unique sculptures related to the period of Mahākṣatrapa Rājuvula and Śoḍāṣa. A doorjamb of the same period records the installation of Mahāsthāna at Katra site probably for the worship of Vāsudeva. [65]

During the period of Kuṣāṇa rulers Mathura artist developed their own style amidst the favourable condition for the advancement of art. Mathura sculptor not only stated the needs of Mathura peoples but made surplus sculptures which were exported in the different places of the country. Kauśāmbī and Sarnath's Bodhisattvas respectively records the 2nd and 3rd reignal year of Kaniṣka and were exported from Mathura.[66]

The places, having Mathura sculptures include Taxila in Pakistan, and Begram in Afganistan, Chandraketu Garh in West Bengal and Mahasthān in Bangladesh, Sarnath, Śrāvastī and Kasiyā in Uttar Pradesh. A large number of Mathura sculptures are made up of typical spotted red sand stone of Mathura 117 sculptures were unearthed in 1985 from a pit in the *vihāra* complex of the stūpa at Sanghol in Ludhiana district, belonging to Kuṣāṇa period of Mathura school. It seems that these architectural parts were exported from Mathura to fulfil the requirement of this distant place. Several masterpieces were carved in this period and Mathura stone sculptural art reached its zenith; hence rightly described as golden age for the Mathura school of art.

Medium of carving

The Mathura sculptor has used the special variety of stone known as red sand stone with varying shades of colour

with white, dull white, creamish or buff spotted stone. This type of stone was available in the neighbouring region of Mathura viz. Agra, Rupbas, Sikri, Karauli. etc.[67] This stone is composed of mud, clay, silt and gravel transported from the nativity through water action and deposited in the form of layers, one over the other and transformed into rock.[68] This typical stone used by the Mathura sculpture, has an important benefit, for the art historian as the sculptures of Mathura could identified easily because of their special material used for carving i.e. spotted red sand stone. Sculptor of early period also used buff and red sand stone for carving the statues of *yakṣas.*

Part I - Period of Emergence

Origin of Mathura School of Sculptures [Period of emergence]

The topic can be divided in to two parts :

1. Sculptures of Mauryan period.
2. Sculptures of Śuṅga period.

Sculptures of Mauryan period

It is the fact that in 3rd century BCE Mathura art tradition was well established.[69] During the Mauryan period Mathura was in the process of becoming a full-fledged city. Various factors like development of trade routes, metropolitan character and economic function within hinterland were influential and responsible for artistic creations in this region.[70] Archaeological data suggests that Mathura was greatly urbanised during this period.[71] These circumstances gave rise to the art and sculptural activities.

Yakṣa statues are the earliest known images of Mathura art which can be related to the folk art of Mauryan period. These types of images were found at Parkham, Baroda, Patna, Pavaya, Bharnakalan.[72]

According to the Indian traditions, these are the deities, imparting wealth and protection. Kubera is their Lord. Ancient classical literature including Buddhist canon, is full of references relating to the *yakṣa* worship. *Yakṣa chaityas* marked the villages of those days. The Buddha himself exhorted the Lichchhavi Vajjis "to honour and support Vajjian *chaityas* in the city or outside it" and to continue their time-honoured offering to them. According to the *Nidānakathā*, Sujātā offered to Gautama sitting under the *bodhi* tree, for the spirit of that tree to whom she daily brought her offering of milk-rice.[73] Six colossal images of *yakṣa* and *yakṣīs* have been found till now in the Mathura region as well as in other part of the country.

At Mathura, the huge *yakṣa*/*yakṣīs* figures perhaps worshiped independently. Dr. Vogel rightly observes, that an image of this size could serve the purpose of a simple attendant.[74] As it is depicted in the sculptural art at Bharhut where the *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* figure serves as attendant deities.

The *yakṣī* from the Nagla Jhinga also have the same kind of inscription where the name of sculptor is Nāka and the teacher in both the cases is Kuṇika.[75] This suggests that image-making was in vogue from early times and was practised in the *guruśiṣya parampara. Yakṣī* from Jhinga ka Nagla, *yakṣa* from Noh, Baroda are worth mentioning here.

These images, though not related directly to Buddhist art, but it is mentioned in several Buddhist texts such as, *Āṭānāṭīya Suttanta* [76] (*Dīgha Nikāya*, III). The most important thing is that they serve as a prototypes for future Buddha/Bodhisattva and deities of other pantheon. Though, these statues are not sophistically carved, but their importance lies in the fact that they are the first specimen of Indian art other than Aśokan art in stone.

The word *yakṣa* has been mentioned in several texts like *Ṛgveda*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and *Mahābhārata* etc. including the Buddhist and Jain texts. *Yakṣas* are regarded as semi-celestial beings.

The word *yakṣa* occurs very frequently in the Vedic texts. The epics also portray *yakṣa* as semi divine beings. According to the epics the *yakṣa* cult had spread to the Himalaya region, Hairaṇvata Varsha, Kurukṣetra, Magadha, Pānchāla, Malada and Kurūś Janapadas and Laṅkā.[77] It first, occurred in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* . [78]

It seems *yakṣa* worship became more poplar during the period of 6th century BCE to 1st century BCE Before the development of pantheons of the different sects it was only the images of *yakṣa* who were under worship.[79] *Yakṣa* may be considered as a non Vedic deity.

According to Jain works, *yakṣas* assumed different roles in relation to human beings. They can be benevolent, malevolent and converted.[80] The *Antagaḍa Dasāo*, mentions an interesting story of a garland maker and *Jakkha Moggara-*

Pāṇi. The *yakṣa* (*jakkha Moggara-Pāṇi*) were equipped with iron mace. [81]

The Jain text *Ovāiya Sūtra* narrates about the shrine of the Puṇṇabhadda of Champā, which was decorated with umbrella, standards (*sajjhaya*), bells, flags, peacock feather-whisk (*lomahattha*) and railing (*Veyaḍḍi*).The inner floor was coated with cow-dung and the walls were white-washed. It bore palm impressions in red *gosīsa* or *darada* sandal wood; it looked beautiful with *chandana Kalaśas* and its doors were furnished with *toraṇa* with *chandanaghaṭa* decoration. The floor was sprinkled with perfumed, water and garlands were hung, and it was odorous with flowers of fine colours, *kālāguru*, *kundurukka* and *turukka*; it was haunted by all class of society and elite people. This description can be concluded with the fact that the *yakṣa* worship was very popular in ancient India and the abode of *yakṣa* i.e. *Chaitya* was adorned by the devotees with great passion and charm. The shrine was very popular amongst people. Mahāvīra, Buddha and many other religious ascetics are represented as halting or resting in these shrines.[82] It may be sum up, that the worship of *yakṣa* was most common in ancient India and consequently every important city had its own shrine dedicated to a *yakṣa*. [83]

Similarly, the Buddhist text *Aṅguttara Nikāya* mentions the "bestial *yakṣas*" in the region of Mathura. Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddha Charita* mentions that one such *yakṣa* named Gardabha, is said to have been converted by the Buddha.[84] *Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya* also indicates the prevailing worship of *yakṣa* in the Mathura region, wherein Brahmins entreat the Buddha to quell *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* who ravage the city. The Buddha subsequently converts these beings to Buddhism, and the citizens of Mathura enjoy building Buddhist *vihāras* in his honour. [85]

Yakṣas were depicted in early art in two forms first; in round and second; in relief. Early *yakṣa* sculptures have come mainly from three regions, namely, Patna, Mathura and Vidisha. In the Mauryan period *yakṣa* statues were carved in round and later in Śuṅga period, carved in relief. *Yakṣa* statues discovered in the Mathura region are as follows:[86]

1. Colossal statue from village Parkham records the name of the sculptor a Gomitaka and his teacher Kuṇika (GMM. No. C.1)
2. Inscribed *yakṣī* from Nagla jhinga seated on a wicker seat, with an inscription on the pedestal referring to the sculptor as Nāka and his teachers name as Kuṇika. (GMM, No. 72.5)
3. *Yakṣa* from Baroda is resembles the Parkham image and wearing heavy earrings in the cloven earlobes, a flat torque fastened by a band and a necklace with an interwoven knot ending in two lovely tassels. [87]
4. A colossal *yakṣa* statue in village Noh in Bharatpur district. It is in close affinity with the Parkham image.

5&6. Two standing buff sand stone images in the Parkham style acquired from Bharna Kala in 1987 (GMM. No. 87. 145).[88]

In the other places of central India; *yakṣa* images were found from Besnagar; near Bhopal, Pawaya, and Patna etc.

Discussion on some of the important statues of *yakṣa*/ *yakṣī* found in the Mathura or in its nearby area is as follows:

Parkham *yakṣa*

The sculpture under discussion was acquired by Cunningham from village Parkham, 23 km. south of Mathura. The sculpture has a girdle fastened round the waist with two fillets hanging from the knot of girdle and falling between the thighs, wearing a necklace with four knots behind, a flat waist band and a chest band, big earrings, and a thin transparent *dhotī*. On the pedestal of the Parkham *yakṣa* an inscription reads, "*Nibhadapuga rāna atha....pi Kuṇikāntevāsinā Gomitakena Katā*". (Plate 5.1) (In the guild of Nibhad in the reign of the king ....made by Gomitaka, the pupil of Kuṇika.[89]) the Image is heavy and having frontality. Traces of arm band can also be seen in one of the mutilated arm. The inscription on the pedestal is in early Brāhmī letters.[90]

Headless *yakṣī* Lāyāva

A headless *yakṣī* is also important as it bears an inscription, that (this image of) *yakṣī* Lāyāva has been caused to be made by the sons of sā and made by Nāka, pupil of Kuṇika.[91]

1. *Sā putehi kārito*
2. *Yakhī lāyāva Kuṇikāte*

3. [*vāsina Nāke*] *ne katā*" [92]

She is seated on the bamboo seat. It was found near the village Jhinga ka Nagla. It is contemporary to Parkham *yakṣa* as can be suggested by the name Kuṇika, the master of the sculptor Nāka and Gomitaka.[93] Baroda *yakṣa* and *yakṣī* found in the village Noh have a close resemblance to Parkham *yakṣa*. Dr. Vogel states that it is impossible that an image of this size could be an attendant".[94] (Plate 5.2)

In the words of R. P. Chanda "These two statues are the crudest products of the early Indian school". These *yakṣa* statue shows that the Mathura had a base to further flourish art activities in the regions. In the words of R. C. Sharma, "These *yakṣa* statues are the earliest specimens of the sculptural activities of Mathura. Fact reveals the names of two sculptors written on two statues and name of their common teacher is also mentioned.... This clearly suggests that at least three centuries before the Kuṣāṇa rule, art was practiced in the Mathura region as a regular discipline and there were master craftsmen and their disciples (*antevāsīs*) as recoded on the pedestals of the two above cited *yakṣa* statues. This indicates that Mathura was already a centre of sculptural art even in the Mauryan-Śuṅga epoch..."[95]

Although no trace of an Aśokan pillar or any other sculpture carved from the *chunara* sandstone has been found at Mathura; but a place near Bharatpur at a distance of 27 miles from Mathura, a fragment of *chunara* sandstone with distinct Mauryan polish has been unearthed during the course of the excavations at Noh.[96]

A stele recovered from the Mathura also indicates that there was originally an Aśokan pillar at Mathura from Kankali-Tila dated circa 120 BCE.[97] It depicts a lion pillar being circumambulated by a man and woman. It is shown surrounded by a low railing, as seen in the sculpture of Sanchi stūpa No. II. Hiuen Tsang also mentioned that there are three stūpa built by Aśoka; in view of this, it may be possible that probably he built a lion pillar but it is mere speculation, no traces of pillar or its fragments is yet unearthed from Mathura or its nearby area.

Buddhist art of Mathura: during Śuṅga period (2nd-1st century BCE)

Like Sanchi and Bharhut there exist Stūpa and *chaityas* at Mathura in pre-Christ era, following the trends of the art of Bahrhut and Sanchi. Some sculptures clearly suggests that the early art of Mathura is more similar to that of Bharhut, Bodhgaya than Sanchi. Very few specimens of this period have been found yet, compared to the sites mentioned above. It could be justified that the art during 2nd to 1st century BCE is not absent in Mathura art.

We are not fortunate enough, to get the intact remains of these stūpa like Sanchi. The stūpa built during this period could not survive for the posterity and remains of these stūpa are turned into the form of mound. Several excavations were conducted in this region, as a result many sculptures unearthed. The rail posts narrating Bāvāri and Dukkhopādāna *jātakas* are magnificent specimens. The depiction of a variety of lotus in the medallion is also remarkable. The Buddha, still was represented through symbols like *bodhivūkṣa*, stūpa, *bhikshāpāḥra* etc. Some times, scenes of music and dance are also depicted. The reliefs are flat and low but bold carvings are experimented on it in case of a female dancer.[98]

Some of the important characteristics of the Śuṅga art at Mathura include; low relief carving as we generally found at other contemporary art centres. The figures of women and men are shown wearing abandoned jewellery, big and heavy headgear; decorated with wreaths and garlands, beads and pieces of costly cloth. The human sculptures are devoid of any expression. Buddha, as said earlier is still depicted in symbolic form; remarkably some new symbols were also applied for the first time by the sculptors such as *prabhā-maṇḍala* and *bhikṣā pātra*.

The main findings; covering the whole period are as follows including the details of the inscriptions carved on them:

Discovery of inscribed Buddhist railing pillar by Alexander Cunningham

In the year 1871-72, General Cunningham discovered a railing pillar from Mathura bearing an inscription in seven lines. This mutilated inscription records the dedication of a railing and gateways around a *ratnagūha* by Vadhapāla Dhanabhūti, son of Vatsi, for the worship of all Buddhas.[99] (Plate 5.3)

One significant piece of epigraphical evidence might indicate that Buddhist monuments were constructed at Mathura approximately at the same time as at Bharhut.

Alexander Cunningham in his reports in 1871-72[100] mentioned about an inscribed railing pillar. According to him "This inscription was originally cut from a corner pillar of an enclosure with sockets for railing on two adjacent faces, and sculptures on the other two faces. Afterwards another railing was attached, and fresh holes of larger size were cut in the faces bearing the inscription. Some of the letters in the last line are doubtful, but the general drift of the record is to announce some gift of Dhanabhūti, the son of ...bhūti, in honour of all Buddha."[101]

Further, Cunningham also described the figure, carved on the pillar in detail, it is as follows, "The sculpture of the uninjured face represents Prince Siddhārtha leaving Kapilavastu on his horse Kaṅthaka, whose feet is upheld by the four *yakṣas* to prevent the clatter from their hoofs from awakening the guards. On the adjacent side is the inscription placed, above a Buddhist railing. During subsequent period the pillar was pierced with larger holes to receive a set of rail-bars on the inscription face. One of these holes are cut through upper three lines of the inscription, as few letters still remain on each side of the hole it is possible to restore some of the missing letters.[102]

In two Bharhut inscriptions occur the names of four successive generations of a dynasty, Rājā Gārgiputra Viśadeva, Gauptiputra Agaraju, Vatsiputra, Dhanabhūti, and Kumāra Vadhapāla, the last two names of which are evidently identical with those mentioned in the (now lost) Mathura railing pillar inscription.[103] It shows some connection with the ruling dynasties of Bharhut and Mathura region. We find the great similarity in the style of sculptures produced during this period at Bharhut and Mathura art.[104]

It is possible that Dhanabhūti an inscription from Mathura can be recognised due to donors name as Dhanabhūti is mentioned in two or three inscriptions at Bharhut.[105] its drawing was published in Cunningham's ASI report Vol. III.[106]

This inscription is as follows:-

1. *Kapa-- (Dhana)*
2. *Bhūti[sa]... Vāts[ī]*
3. *putrasa (Vādha pā)...lasa*
4. *Dhanabhūtisa dānam Vedikā*
5. *toraṇa ca ratanagraha sa--*
6. *va Budha pujāye sahā māta più*
7. *tā ki sahā ..catuha pariṣāhi.*

(The gift of Dhanabhūti..of -la, son of a -tsī, of -bhūi, a railing and gateways at (?)the *ratnagraha*, for the sake of honouring all the Buddha, with his mother and father, and with the four assemblies.")

At Bharhut also Dhanabhūti and members of his family made major donations to the Buddhist stūpa. It seems partially or fully Mathura was under the control of Śuṅgas. But Dhanabhūti still have not been proved as Śuṅga king.[107]

This proves that the Buddhist art/architectural activities started at Mathura and Bharhut approximately at the same time. Sculptural activity suddenly got a movement because in this period the prosperity of Mathura can be evident from the combined evidence of archaeological excavations, literature, epigraphs, and sculptures. They reflect the process of urbanization, the effective control of the state by powerful kings aspiring to expand the boundaries of their territories, prevalence of peace and prosperity assuring a congenial atmosphere for propagation of art. These factors contributed in forming as a national pattern of culture and art.[108] As said earlier, Pāṇini mentioned the name of Mathura several times in the *Mahābhāṣya* written by him in 2nd century BCE, shows its cultural importance and prosperity.

It shows that during the Śuṅga period, Buddhist edifice existed in process of construction at Bharhut and Mathura probably in the year of 150 BCE. The coincidence of the same name appearing in donatives' inscriptions at the two different sites may also suggest the possibility of royal pilgrimage to both sites. If the Dhanabhūti of Mathura and the Dhanabhūti of Bharhut could be compared, than a cultural link between Mathura and Bharhut can be established.[109] Probably due to this interaction, Buddhist art of Bharhut and Mathura during 2nd and 1st century BCE had a great similarity.

During this period Mathura also faced an invasion of Menander as Ptolemy recorded that in the early 2nd century BCE. Menander's territory was extended up to Mathura.[110] But this could not affected the art activities taking the shape during this period.

Sculptures related to this period

Buddhist sculptures

The sculptures related to this period were carved in a distinct style similar to that of the sculptures from Bharhut, with minor regional variations. As V.S. Agrawala also expressed that "the artists of Mathura had taken their clue from the master craftsmen working at Bharhut and Sanchi; but adopting the ancient art traditions and motifs they developed a new enthusiasm and technique with the result that the creative genius of the Mathura sculptor flourished it into one of the greatest school of Indian sculptural art, Its contents, motifs, style and characteristic features are comprehensive and of the highest aesthetic quality. The artists of Mathura derived the full advantage from the traditional stock of tree and animal motifs that were known to their predecessors at Sanchi and Bharhut. But they have added many new things of their own." During this period the sculptures are found in the form of architectural fragments such as railing, *sūchī*, *toraṇa* etc. because as said earlier no complete monuments survived of this period like the one at Sanchi. Sculptures of this period can be divided in to two groups 1. Sculptures which are directly related to the Buddhist themes 2. Other sculpture includes male and female figures, decorative motifs, animal figures etc.

Sculptures related to Buddhist theme include, mainly symbolic representation of Buddha. These sculptures convey the chief life event of Buddha and his worship in symbolic form. This events/symbolic worship includes conception (the birth) rider less horse (*Mahābhiniṣakramaṇa*), the *Bodhi* shrine, depiction of stūpa or stūpa worship, *chakra* worship (first sermon), *triratna*, *Jātakas*, etc.

Rail post with stūpa worship

A rail post is carved with a stūpa and Bodhi tree on the next face of it; partially mutilated. Stūpa is depicted with only lower railing, a *harmikā* and *chhatra* with garlands on either side of it, flanked by two devotees standing with folded hand. The *bodhi* tree is depicted on its right side with an arched gateway with three curved horizontal architraves and a garland hangs stiffly from the middle part of the lower architrave. This symbolic depiction of stūpa and *bodhi* tree denotes the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* and the enlightenment of Buddha. One more example of *bodhi* tree can be seen carved on the railing pillar surrounded by a railing and four *chhatra*; three in the front part, one is probably behind the tree hence, can not seen in the relief. Stepped Merlon can be seen on the upper part of relief. This magnificent depiction of *bodhi* is denoting the enlightenment of Buddha. **(Plate 5.4a, b, c)**

Stūpa with flag

A relief (probably from coping stone) with the depiction of a stūpa having a lower railing, *harmikā* an entrance gateway with a female devotee coming inside, is very important depiction because the stūpa bears the palm prints over its middle part as we have marked previously on one of the relief at Bharhut. The back of the female devotee is also depicted by sculptor very accurately. **(Plate 5.5a, b)**

Bodhi tree in cross bar medallion

A cross bar medallion from Mathura depicts an edifice of four pillars, inclining inwards, and an entablature corbelled outwards to form a flat gallery or promenede. This depiction of *bodhi* tree with a simple architecture of arched shaped entrance and *harmikā* type terraced roof over which is seen a *chhatra* is beautifully depicted in a medalion is another good example of Śuṅga art of Mathura. Two flags on either side and a raling around the bodhi temple may be marked clearly. Palm prints are also seen on the lower side of medallion below the railing. **(Plate 5.6)**

Railing pillar depicting pillar worship

A relief, depicting a Aśokan pillar is surmounted by a lion and sourrounded with circular railing. A man and woman wearing typical Śuṅga drapery are depicted circumambulating clockwise, touching it with their right hand. This relief suggests that even at that time the pillar worship was in prevailance. **(Plate 5.7)**

Worship of *chakra*

A relief is depicting a *dharma chakra,* symbolising the first sermon of Buddha at Sarnath. *Chakra* is placed over a high pedestal of altar design. Pedestal is consisting of two three stepped platform inversely joint. Two flags on its right and left side may be seen, bellowing in the air. **(Plate 5.8)** (GMM, fragment No. 438)

Jātakas

Dukkhopādān Jātaka

A railing pillar is carved with full medallion, one in the middle and half at the top and at the lower part of railing pillar. Railing pillar depict a *Jātaka.* One medallion portrays an ascetic seated beside his forest hut, with a snake, a deer, a crow and above a dove facing him. Foucher identified this *Jātaka* as "Worst Evil". ..this *Jātaka* is found in the work of a late Ming dynasty Chinese monk. (GMM No. 15. 586).[111] He is engaged in serious conversation with four wild creatures. **(Plate 5.9)**

According to M. Foucher "The *Jātaka* story relates the discussion on the nature of the worst evil, which took place amongst four monks of the Jetvana monastery. Love is the worst evil said the first. Hunger, said the second Hate, said the third. Fear, said the fourth. The dispute was referred to the Buddha who said, "Your reasons do not go to the core of the matter. All evils come from the fact that we have a body. Love, hunger and fear as well as other sufferings are felt by a being only because he has a body. The worst evil is to have a body. Final repose comes from '*nirvāṇa*' which is the supreme beatitude." As usual, in the *Jātaka* the Buddha connects his decision with a past legend which runs thus: In olden days four creatures, which were living together in cave discussed the same subject. It is irresistible passion (*kāma*) which is the most dangerous of evils, said the dove. It is hunger (*lobha*) which throws one into nets or snares, said the crow. It is envenomed hate (*dveṣa*) said the snake. It is perpetual fear (*bhaya*) said the deer. " no" said an ascetic who had been listening to them , " the worst of evil is to have a body".

According to V.S. Agrawala the pillar belongs to the 1st century BCE i.e. the period of the Śakas at Mathura. It was found in 1915 in river Yamuna near Surajghat in the vicinity of the Saptarshi Tila, the site of the Lion-Capital.[112]

Bāvāri *Jātaka*

A top of half medallion of a pillar is carved with the *Jātaka* tale of Bāvāri. V.S. Agrawala[113] identified the scene as the visit of the sixteen disciples of Brahman ascetic Bāvāri to the Buddha, a story found in the *Sutta Nipāta.* According to him, it has depicted the scene to represent the visit of the 16 disciples of Brahmin ascetic Bāvāri who lived on the banks of the Godavari. To him, came another Brahman demanding 500 pieces of money. Not obtaining these he cursed Bāvāri saying "May thy head on the seventh day hence split into seven". Bāvāri was greatly distressed, seeing his trouble a benevolent deity reassured him by saying that the Brahmin neither knew the meaning of the head nor the meaning of "splitting of head" he directed him to Buddha. At his suggestion Bāvāri sent his 16 disciples to Buddha. Each one of his pupils asked the Buddha a question, to which he answered. The present relief depicted Brahman ascetics, in sitting posture wearing *yogapaṭṭa* and Bāvāri wearing *uṣṇīṣa* a dhoti and a *uttarīya* covering one solder holding a *chhatra* and one hand in *abhaya mudrā.* This standing figure could not be identified as the figure of Buddha as he is holding a *chhatra* and wearing *dhotī* and earrings. The relief has depicted the ascetic Bāvāri and his disciples sitting in front of him. *Dhotī* falling between the legs is same as *yakṣa* wearing in the Mauryan art and post Mauryan art. **(Plate 5.10)**

Vaṇṇupatha Jātaka

Actual position of this architectural fragment is not clear. The relief depicted two men one sitting and one standing with two seated bulls in opposite direction and an unyoked bullock cart. It is probably depicted *Vaṇṇupatha Jātaka.* In this story Śākyamuni Buddha, in his former birth as a merchant, was part of a caravan crossing a desert for the purposes of trade; unfortunately, Caravan was lost in desert. They gave up all hopes to over come from this problem. Bodhisattva thought " If I given in, every single one will perish." So he ranged to and fro while it was still early and cool, until he came on a clump of *kuśa* grass. "This grass," thought he, "can only have grown up here thanks to the presence of water underneath," as per order they started digging and ultimately found the water. And as soon as the sun set down, they hoisted a flag by the side of the well and travelled on to their destination.[114] **(Plate 5.11)**

Assamukhī Jātaka (Aśvamukhī Jātaka)

An upright shows a carved medallion with the horse faced *yakṣī* Assamukhī" who dwelt in a rock -cave in a vast forest at the foot of a mountain and used to catch and devour men that frequented the road. The artist has shown her subdued affection for a young male with whom she is in love. This *jātaka* appears to be very famous among the

laity and sculptor. It is depicted in all early Śuṅga sites viz. stūpa No. II, III, at Sanchi, Bodhgaya and Pāṭalīputra. (Plate 5.12) (GMM, No.191).

Miscellaneous sculptures : (including male and female figures, decorative motifs, animal figures etc.)

Bas relief panel with a male *Chāuri* Bearer:

A man is depicted holding a fly whisk in his one hand, wearing a one sided big turban; ear rings, two necklaces one is depicted near to the neck and second one has four string depicted falling up to the chest; typical Śuṅga styled armlets. Here a new feature is the upper cloth on body, which is beautifully depicted by sculptor through carving wavy lines. Where as eyeballs are absent and follows the earlier art tradition. Overall view is frontal and the sculpture represents typical Śuṅga period art features. (Plate 5.13 & 5.14)

The bust of Yakṣa holding a club and a child

The bust of *yakṣa* holding a club in the right, and a child in the left hand (GMM, No. 00.I.18.) is a characteristic art piece of the Śuṅga period. Only head and torso of the yakṣa have survived. This type of yakṣa image seems to be popular in Mathura region; at least four statues representing the same feature have been discovered from Bharana Kalan and Palval. These figures are larger than the life size. According to V.S. Agrawala[115] it is mentioned in the story of *Mahāsutasoma Jātaka* who feeds on children, but the identification of this *yakṣa* because of a feature in the said *jātaka* is unclear. The turban worn by *yakṣa* is big and ornamented he also wears a big ear ornament, two necklace, armlets, bangles. *Yakṣa* is holding a sword in one hand and in the other holding a male child. It seems that the *yakṣa* was serving as protector of male child (one such *yakṣa* holding a nude male child). (Plate 5.15) (GMM, No. 00.I.18.)

Female worshipers

Two female worshipers are magnificently carved on the railing pillars (now in the collection of Los Angeles County Museum of Art)[116] are in a adoration position; one is offering flowers on an unidentified object, whereas other is standing with folded hands. The diaphanous drapery is beautifully presented by the sculptor by incised line drawing. Girdle, earrings, bangles and headgear has a great similarity with the *yakṣī* of Bharhut; but some of the ornaments like 'V' shaped necklace is absent, earrings are lighter and armlets are more simple in design. Now the *yakṣī* of Bharhut is holding a bough of a tree is replaced by the female devotees in the Śuṅga art of Mathura region. The facial features, drapery and jewellery all is very similar to the Bharhut *yakṣī*, but the female devotees are depicted wearing less jewellery. (Plate 5.16)

Cross bar Medallions

Elephant and rider

This medallion is beautifully carved with two elephant riders, one is holding *aṅkuṣa* second is holding a rope tied through the body of elephant, so that he should not fell down and one hand is raised in the air. Both are wearing typical headgear of Śuṅga style. Lower garments are clearly visible. Elephant is covered with a designed cloth. A bell in the front side is also visible with one prominent tooth, his head and ears are also decorated. This type of majestic depiction is not present even at Bharhut and Bodhgaya. The riders, including elephant in the background of a lotus is majestically carved. The size of medallion i.e. 30 cm. suggests that it was a part of massive railing like the one at Bharhut. According to V.S. Agrawala, the composition is supremely exquisite and bears testimony to the high achievements of Mathura artists in the second century BCE (GMM, No. 341) (Plate 5.17a, b, c, d, e, f, g)

Bull-rider

Cross-bar medallion is carved with the figures of a bull and a rider on its back. The bull-rider is depicted holding its tail with his left hand. (GMM, No. 2322.)

Fish tailed man

In a round medallion it depicts a composite figure, having the body of a male and instead of legs, it is fish tail. He wears a usual drapery i.e. *uṣaṇīṣa, dhotī,* necklace, big earrings, bangles. A duck is also depicted besides him.

Lady riding on horse

A female is depicted, riding a horse is beautifully carved with slender body and the horse is looking back towards the lady rider.

Lady with big headgear

A female face had been depicted in round medallion inside a lotus border. She is wearing conspicuous head gear. Big bun, ornamented hair band and lose hair, falling up to the ear, is beautifuly depicted. Bead and reel boarder out side the lotus flower is reminding the design which was used in the inverted lotus in Aśokan pillar. (GMM, No. L.22)

Mythical animals

Mythical animals were also depicted and it was the favourite subject of Mathura sculptor, since the time of Mauryan and post Mauryan period. One such mythical animal *vyāghra machchha* can be seen on the wicker seat of the *yakṣī* Lāyāva found from the Nagala Jhinga. Sculptor have depicted *vyāghra maccha, gaja maccha, aśva maccha, vṛṣabha machchha, nara machchh*, animals with wings etc. **(Plate 5.17f, g)**

Railing pillar depicting *yakṣī*

A *yakṣī* is depicted standing on a squatting dwarf with projecting eyes and *śaḍku karṇa*. She is depicted wearing a belt. Her cloths are transparent and showing her nudity. She is carved with the elaborate headgear, necklace, armlets, bracelets, girdle and anklets. She is holding the ends of a belt which is falling loosely in front of her thighs. Her anklets are typical and designer. She has put on a *bindī* on her forehead. The upper medallion depicted a *Jātaka* in which there is a brāhmiṇa holding a parasol and seven other persons in front of him listening to his discourse. Over all depiction is very magnificent and the figure is akin to the female figure present in railing pillar at Bharhut.[117] **(Plate 5.18 a, b, c)**

Railing pillar from Hathin, Bhadas & Amin (Haryana), Bulandshahar (U.P.)

A railing pillar recovered from Hathin south of Delhi, in the Faridabad district of Haryana depict *yakṣa* and medallion with the dream of Māyā is carved in the spotted red sand stone indicates that it was made by the Mathura sculptor. The total height of pillar is about six feet i.e. around two meters, similar to the railing pillar in which *yakṣī* is tying her belt around waist. It is probably the earliest sculpture exported from Mathura to a distant place as early as in 1st century BCE. The most interesting feature of the pillar is the depiction of the dream of Māyā where she is shown sleeping on her left side, a bed, an elephant can be seen on the left side, hovering in the air, by the side of the bed are utensils for food and water. On the upper left side a barrel vaulted roof can also be seen. The *yakṣa* stands on a dwarf, both arms are held down by his sides, and in his left hand is a cluster of leaves and fruits. The jewellery and *dhotī* worn by him is of typical Śuṅga period.

Another railing pillar was recovered from a dry well in a village Bhadas. Bhadas in the Gurgaon district of Haryana, is not far from Hathin.[118] It seems that railing pillar from Hathin and Bhadas belongs to the same monuments as they are of same size. The *yakṣa* on the Bhadas pillar stands frontally on an animal. In his one hand he holds a bunch of flowers, while his left hand is down at his hip, and seems to grasp his drapery. In the half medallion depicted is a composite figure of deer and *makara*. His drapery and jewellery is similar to other sculptures of Śuṅga period. Pillar of Amin also belong to the Śuṅga period. Interesting thing, about these pillars is that they are carved on all four sides. In front side there is an amorous couple in typical Śuṅga drapery and jewellery. Man is shown holding a cup, whereas in the second pillar a *yakṣa* is holding a lotus flower in one hand and drapery by other hand. Both the pillars are full of lotus flowers and creepers carvings, in one case it is coming out from the mouth of *yakṣa*. The figures are carved inside the niche. Interestingly two railing pillars found from the Buland Shahar (U.P.) is also carved on red spotted sand stone. *Yakṣas* are carved on railing pillar of Bulandshahar, U.P. Some what elongated figures of *yakṣa* are wearing one sided *uṣṇīṣa, dhotī, uṭṭarīya*. Both the figures are carved on red spotted sand stone.[119]

These entire typical Śuṅga figures from Haryana and U.P. (near south and north Delhi) suggest that Mathura was also famous for the Śuṅga sculptures. The sculptures are found from the distant places like Bulandshahar and Haryana suggests that the sculptures were exported from Mathura to distant places. The size of the pillars is about 2 meters, but some of the pillars such as Bulandshahar pillar and Amin pillars are reduce to approximately half of the Pillars of Bhadsa and Hathin. **(Plate 5.19, 5.20, 5.21, 5.22, 5.23)**

Yakṣa statue from Śuṅga period

It is important to note that during the Śuṅga period in central and eastern India, Sanchi and Bharhut were gradually developing and evidences are there to show that Mathura was also in the same process. *Yakṣa* statues are depicted as an attendants on the railing of the Stūpa at Bharhut i.e., inferior to Buddha. Whereas, at Mathura *yakṣa* figures were still carved in round as an independent figure, though some of them have been carved in high relief.

Yakṣa image acquired from the place Nanakpura represented Śuṅga period sculpture. It is carved in buff stone, depicts a turban fastened with a ribbon suspended on back side, is a common feature of Śuṅga period. He wears two necklaces, big and heavy ear rings and thin *dhotī* or lower garment with several pleats. Another *yakṣa* from Bharana Kalan also shows similar features.

Slight change occurs in the style of carving of the statues of *yakṣa* in Mauryan to Śuṅga period. Robust body became slender, one sided big turban may be seen, fillets of waist band is more ornamental, facial features became more sharp, holding a sword or club, one hand is resting near to the waist. Here some traits are still in continuation, such as the style of *dhotī* is same, in both the sculptures slightly lifted right leg shows movement, ornaments including necklaces and ear rings are same, the thread which ties the necklace is seen on the back of sculptures, but now number of fillets are reduced from four to two, both the sculptures shows deep naval, style of tying the *dhotī,* on the back is also same, but cloth tied around chest of former is absent in the later figure. Major traits are still seen in Śuṅga *yakṣa* but refinement of sculpture is very clear. The art of Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Sanchi, shows the progressive development in successive Indian sculptural art during the period circa 150 to 50 BCE.

Yakṣī from Mehrauli

The *yakṣī* have been found from Mehrauli (the place can be considered to lie within the cultural zone of Mathura i.e. the Janapada of Śūrasena). This figure is stated to have been found during excavations near the Qutub Minar at Mehrauli in 1912.[120] The sculpture shows a female figure standing under a tree and embracing the trunk of the tree with her left hand and held a branch of the tree with the up-lifted right hand like a *Śālabhañjikā* figure. It is carved on a railing pillar and later reused as an architectural element. The sculpture is made up of buff coloured sand stone and is to be assigned to the 2nd century BCE. The figure is broken off below the knees of *yakṣī*, including arms and face. She is depicted in conspicuous hairdo with plait and big bun and the beads, are woven into her hair, wearing four necklaces, one have *triratna* design with human face, wearing *dhotī* which have good depiction of several pleats. She wears a girdle having six strings and seems to hold a branch of a tree. Slender waist and round breast makes her more attractive and shows the perfection of sculptor over the medium of stone. The figure is very near to the Bharhut art style.

Kāmaloka Pillar

Despite, the worn condition of the *Kāmaloka* pillar, its relief carvings are among the most interesting and intricate belonging to this period at Mathura.[121] J.P. Vogel identified the scene carved on it as of pleasure world. It depicts the scenes of pleasure and cavorting [122] these type of pleasure scenes are not new, as stūpa No. I at Sanchi have several depictions of '*Kāmaloka/vanavihāra.*' But inspite of palace the amorous couple are depicted amidst the forest or pleasure garden. The pillar is 1.6 meters in height and it was sliced down from the middle later on. Now, it is in form of a tall, thin rectangular slab, divided into eight panels. The lowermost panel is partly broken and worn, depicts *yakṣas* holding weight of pillar on one hand. Next two panels depict early architectural structures. Palm trees have been depicted beautifully in front of barrel vaulted palace. In the next panel, a man and a woman is seated in lower left corner. She is looking towards him. His right hand and her left hand are raised. In front of them a musical performance is being performed. Behind the seated couple, stand two female figures, they are attendants? To the right of female dancer are musicians playing drums and harp. In the next panel, beneath two ogee arches separated by a pillar, are two scenes, one is depicting a woman reclining on a couch, and a man is bending over the figure on the couch, next part depicts a male figure apparently with is arms around the shoulders of two flanking female figures, pillars which is topped by addoresed couchant lions and an inverse stepped type can also be seen.

Coping stone

Coping stones recovered from Mathura region depict the same features as we found at Sarnath. Upper boarder shows bell intervened with lotus bud and hanging from a reel and bead design. At Bharhut these design are carved at the lower boarder and upper boarder associated with stepped Merlon, intervening with lotus bud. At Bharhut, coping stones are profusely carved with *Jātaka* tales, jewellery design, creepers, and mythical animals. Whereas at Mathura coping stone are decorated with mythical animals, acanthus leaves and with other new animal like rhinoceros, bull etc. At Sarnath coping stone is carved with a stūpa and devotees standing with folded hands on the either side of the stūpa. (Plate 5.22a, b, c.)

Brahmanical sculptural art of Śuṅga period

Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar[123] has firmly established that as early as the 4th and 3rd century BCE a religious system with Vāsudeva as its central figure came into existence. The important epigraphic record comes from Ghosuṇḍi, a village in Rajasthan.[124] In the script of the 2nd century BCE, the construction of *Nārāyaṇa Vāṭikā* for the worship of Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva has been recorded. The inscription reads;

1. *Kārito ayaṁ rājñā bhāga(va) (te) na Gājayānena Pārāśarīputreṇa sa-*
2. *rvatātena aśvamedha-yā jinā Bhagava(d) bhyāṁ Saṅkarṣaṇa Vāsudevābhyāṁ*
3. *anihatābhyāṁ sarveśvarā bhyāṁ pūjā-śilā-Prākāro Nārāyaṇa-vāḍakā.*

This inscription has been found about four miles north-east of Nagari in the Udaipur (Rajasthan). It records the erection of stone enclosure worship for Bhāgavata Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva, within the enclosure of *Nārāyaṇa Vāṭikā.* This inscription proves that the Bhāgavat cult was becoming popular during the time of the Śuṅgas. Scholars like B. N. Puri[125] holds that it is engraved in Brāhmī characters of the 2nd century BCE.

Another example is Garuḍa column. At Besanagar, there still stands the Garuḍa pillar which was erected by Heliodorus, the ambassador of Antialcidas in honour of Vāsudeva. Heliodorus visited the Śuṅga ruler Bhāgabhadra and is identified as the ninth imperial of Śuṅga family. According to N. R. Ray, the form and features of the Garuḍa column are different from those of Aśokan columns. The pillar is much smaller than the Aśokan ones and has eight angles. It is furnished with an ornamentation consisting of half lotus flowers and above it is divided into sixteen panels, followed by a broad cluster of fruit and finally the shaft continues towards the summit with a surface divided in to 32 panels. The whole structure was originally crowned with Garuḍa,[126] the *vāhana* of Viṣṇu.

At Mathura, another inscription comes from the village of Mora.[127] It refers to a stone shrine (*śaila-devagūha*) built during the time of Mahākṣatrapa Śoḍāṣa and containing the images of *Bhāgavata Vṛṣṇi Pañchavīras.* These were Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Sāmba.[128]

This view is supported by *Aṅgavijjā,*[129] a Jain work of the Kuṣāṇa period. In this text the name of *Pañchavīras* as Kaṇṇho, Rāmo, Sāmbo, Pajjaṇṇo and Pussa (Puruṣa, another name of Aniruddha) In another contemporary inscription from Mathura[130], mention has been made of a shrine (*mahāsthāna* of *Bhāga...va.*" According to N. P. Joshi the passage has generally been read as Bhagavato Vāsudevasya, but that it stands for *Bhagavato Baladevasya* can not be to tally discarded. These inscriptions from Mathura belong to 1st century BCE.

Early Image of Balarāma from Mathura region

Sculpturally, the Balarāma images go back to about the 2nd century BCE. The Brahmanical faith believes Balarāma is a form of Viṣṇu, an incarnation of the cosmic serpent *Śeṣa,* also known as Ananta.[131] In *Vaiṣṇava purāṇa* and *Mahābhārata* especially its final chapter *Harivamśa,* Balarāma is mentioned along with Kṛṣṇa and description of his life and work also given in these texts. Balarāma was master of his two celestial weapons, the plough and pestle. He was also fond of bright colours. Blue cloths, a single ear ring and the use of *vanamālā* were his special characteristics. His standard was a palm (*tāla*) and hence, he was also known as *tāladhvaja, tālaketu* and *tālāṅka.*[132] There, such figures were found from Mathura Varanasi Gwalior respectively. Of the earliest figures attributed to the Śuṅga age, from Mathura includes a two-armed Balarāma from Janasuti. This image has snake canopies on their heads and they carry plough and mace or pestle.

Independent Statue of Balarāma, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, who is taken to be the eighth incarnation of Viṣṇu. Balarāma is an age-old deity associated with wrestling, fighting with clubs, and agriculture. He is also a serpent deity.[133] Balarāma, Baladeva, Saṅkarṣana, Balabhadra are some other popular names of Balarāma, who commanded respect in the Brahmanical as well as Jain pantheon.[134] His early images can be traced back to the 2nd century BCE created by the Mathura sculptor.

The image of Balarāma from the village of Jansuti in Mathura district can be identified as Balarāma as the snake hood arranged in a row above his head, the *musala* in his right hand and *hala* in his left hand. According to V.S. Agrawala, "This image of Balarāma was considered the earliest known sculptural representation of a Brahmanical deity.[135] The image is stiff, frontal and more akin to *yakṣa* image. (GMM, No. 215)

Architrave from Katra (Probably depicting Śiva *Liṅga* shrine)

A Śaiva sect is however mentioned even by Patañjali. While paying his obeisance to Śiva says, "O Lord Śiva! Adorations always unto you Who, for the sake of protecting Mārkaṇḍeya humiliated Yama; the brilliance of whose cheeks outstrips the rays of the moon and to whom people desiring happiness here and hereafter, wealth, etc. pray and who is the embodiment of auspiciousness and bestows it."[136] The members of it were known as *Śivabhāgavatas*, or devotees of Śaiva, the *Bhāgavat*. In the 2nd century BCE Śaiva sect was also firmly established in Mathura. It was popular cult during the time of the Śuṅgas. There are two references in the Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*[137] which suggest a separate cult of the Śaivas; *'Śaiva-Bāgavata'* and *'Śaiva-Vaiśravaṇa'*. In this context a *toraṇa* arch may be worth mentioning here, "Brahmins with Pots in a shrine". A double-sided *toraṇa* architrave was discovered at the site of Katra in Mathura (GMM, No. I) this architrave is one meter long; probably belongs to a Brahmanical shrine. According to V.S. Agrawala this architrave depicts the scene of a refectory in a monastery probably Buddhist, but it seems that it is a Brahmanical shrine where alms are being distributed by some noble men. It is a fact, that monks are not generally depicted in early Buddhist art. On the right side of architrave is depicted a garlanded *vūakṣ chaitya*, near to this is a sacred pillar covered with quadripartite pointed roof or *Śivaliṅga* surrounded by a railing and a *chhatra* with the base of slanting pillar. Four men are sitting turning their face towards the centre. They have small *Jūṭa* on their head and protruding belly. One man is raising hand and a big pot with ladle; also placed before him. A man bends down on his right knee and pouring out the content from the big pot, in his bowl. Behind him, four men are coming to collect the meal holding a bowl. Again, a sacred pillar carved which is covered with quadripartite pointed roof or *Śivaliṅga* surrounded by a railing. In the extreme left a male figure is coming inside the shrine probably, holding a bowl, through the gateway having two architraves. In the lower part of architrave is a railing and rows of bell intervened by lotus buds suspended from an ornamental string. The other side of the Katra architrave depicts a two-story arcaded gallery with a barrel-vaulted structure in centre, with human figures peeing out side. This architrave has immense importance from the point of view that it shows; along with the Jain and Buddhist shrines Brahmanical shrines also emerged side by side and followed by the same sculptural traits prevailing in those periods. The figures are carved in low relief and present a beautiful picture of a Brahmanical shrine. Design of rows of bells in the lower part of architrave reminds the art of Bharhut stūpa where this type of design was carved on coping stone. Bead and reel design follow the trend of Aśoka pillar, in which it is found in the lower part of inverted lotus. **(Plate 5.24)**

Jain Art

Tradition, recorded in Jain texts associates Mathura with many *Tīrthaṅkaras*. Archaeological excavations at Kankali Tila in Mathura unearthed a large number of Jain antiquities comprising dated and undated sculptures, pillars, pilasters, capitals, *āyāgapaṭṭa*, umbrellas, railing posts, cross bars, copings, component parts of gateways, bracket-figures, etc. Some Jain antiquities were found from Sitala Ghati, Rani-Ki-Mandi and Manoharpura localities of Mathura also.

The earliest Jain antiquities excavated from Kankali Tila, Mathura are dated to 2nd century BCE. The excavated material makes it clear that by the 2nd century BCE Jainism obtained a firm footing in Mathura, and also proves that before the beginning of the Christian era Jainism was almost as rich and in flourishing condition at Mathura like Buddhism. For the elevation and outer form of the Mathura stūpa, we have to depend on carvings on *āyāgapaṭṭa* reliefs,

etc. Their study reveals that the Jain stūpa bore a striking similarity with the Buddhist stūpas of the city. The difference consists of the fact that the stūpas of Mathura were fairly slender in comparison to their central India counter parts and decoration on them was also less elaborated. An inscription records the dedication made by a *śrāvaka* named Uttaradasaka proves that a 'Jain *pasāda*' existed at Kankali Tila in Mathura as early as 2nd century BCE Symbolic marks were also worshiped. Inscriptions from Kankali Tila, Mathura contain unfamiliar names like Akaka, Ogha, Okharika and Ujhatika. These names suggest that probably some foreigners had also embraced Jainism. In fact, conversion of foreigners was not unusual to Jainism. Jainism had converted many foreigners, especially Scythian immigrants.

At Mathura, two types of railing can be clearly distinguished. The earlier railing marked the features like medallions are decorated with lotus, number of medallion in an upright pillar seems to be earlier than the Bharhut, Bodhgaya or Sanchi. This pattern of carving lotus in medallion is also found at Pāḥalīputra (Patna) and Lalsote, Rajasthan where railing has three full medallion and two half medallion at the top and bottom. In this way, it is considered to be very old. It is very lively described in the Jain canon *Rāyapaseṇiya Sutta.* The railing is termed as *padmavaravedikā.* Railing pillar is devoid of human and divine figure. In this early phase, we do not get any human face inside the cross bar medallion as found at Bharhut and Bodhgaya. It may be presumed on the basis of style of carving that this railing is as old as the one found during the excavation at Pāḥalīputra.

In the *Rāyapseṇiya Sutta* it is mentioned that "Why, O Revered Sir! is the *padmavaravedikā* called by that particular name?" "O Gautama! It is called *padmavaravedikā* since on its several parts, in several places, on the rails, on the stairway balustrades, on rail planks, in between two rails on the uprights, on their sides, on their copings, in between two pillars, on crossbars, in between crossbars sockets, on sides of crossbars, on the spaces between two cross-bars, on the wings, on the side balustrades, on the corner pillars, on spaces of the side pillars, have carved many kinds of lotus designs, viz. *utpala, padma, kumuda, subhga, saugaṅdhika, punṇḍarīka, mahāpuṇḍarīka, śatapatra* and *sahasrapatra*...and it is for this reason, O Gautama, that the place is called *padmavaravedika*."[138] The text *Rāyapaseṇiya Sutta* (sutra No.14) motioned the word like *sālabhañjiya, Kinner, ghaṭtājāla, chakka, Jakkhamaha, padmalatanad-yāvartaihāmṛga, śrīvatsa, swāstika, haṁsāvai, bhadrāsana, matsya, chandan-kalaśachaitya-vūakṣa, chaitya-stūpa, nāga, bhūta, yakṣapratimā* etc. these things were found place in the sculptural art of that period and later one. The mythical beings (*Ihāmṛgas* were also painted or carved on buildings as the text mentioned as follows: *ṛṣabha* (bull), *Turaṅgas* (horses), *Naras* (human beings), *Magaras* (crocodiles), *Vihagas* (birds), *Nāga* (serpents), *Kinnaras* (centaurs), *Ruras* (deer), *śarabha* (eight legged mighty animal), *chamaras* (*yakṣa*), and *Kunjaras* (elephants).

Apart from the ancient *Padmavaravedikā* number of sculptures carved on the architectural elements is also worth mentioning. Two architraves, those depicting the worship of a stūpa by centaurs and the dance of Nīlāñjanā, are reportedly from Jain site of Kankali Tila is very interesting and important from the point of view of sculptural art. **(Plate 5.25)**

The double-sided architrave (GMM, SML J. 535) depicting the worship of a stūpa by centaurs on one side and a procession on the other. The architrave is 1.21 meters long and eight and a half inches high. The stūpa has three railings and a *harmikā.* Flying deities (*Kinnara*) are carved with the body of half human and half bird and one of them is offering garland and another some thing is kept in a bowl. Like wise the centaurs for the first time are shown worshiping the stūpa. The presence of centaurs may indicate, contact with artistic and mythological traditions of the Mediterranean world.[139] They are carved wearing typical Śuṅga style *uṣṇīṣa* and *dhotī* and offering something kept in bowl and flowers, trees behind the figures suggests forest area. The stūpa is surmounted by a *chhatra* and is carved in a simple form; without *toraṇa.* The sculptures carved on other side are shows the procession of devotees going to visit the stūpa. Some are riding on horse some are on elephant, and some are on bullock cart and some are on foot. All the animals are shown in movement. Galloping horse, elephant and bulls are beautifully depicted. Peeping out faces from the bullock cart is beautifully depicted by the sculptor. **(Plate 5.26)**

Another architrave from the same site depicts rarely carved narrative dance of Nīlañjanā and the renunciation of the Ṛṣabhanātha (SML, No. J. 354). This architrave was

reused as a upright railing at some time later. The incident of renunciation of the Ṛṣabhanātha is mentioned in[140] *Ādi Purāṇa* dated 7th century A.D. According to the text Ṛṣabhanātha, *Jina* was a king before he retreated into a life of asceticism. Indra, realizing that it was time for Ṛṣabhanātha to renounce the princely and worldly life, sent Nīlāñjanā, a celestial nymph whose life was about to end, she kept dancing before the royal assembly. Nīlāñjanā knew that she is to die. During the performance she suddenly fell and died. This episode changed the heart of Ṛṣabhanātha and he renounced the world and became an ascetic.

In the architrave, she is shown dancing under a hut, open from all sides, in front of a group of musicians playing instruments like drum. In the left of the pavilion, is the assembly of seven male viewers, all of them turned towards her. The man with the prominent turban, seated on high pedestal with his right hand in his lap, may be identified as Ṛṣabhanātha, one attendant holding *chāuri* is seen behind the figure. A nude man perhaps monk with a pot and a piece of cloth in his other hand, indicate of the episode of renunciation of Ṛṣabhanātha. This nude ascetic may be identified as *ardhaphālaka* monk, who carries a piece of cloth in their one hand. In the later period monks begin to drape it over their arm and held before them covering their nudity.[141] V.S. Agrawala[142] suggests a different interpretation and identifies it as a scene of birth-celebration of Mahāvīra, but according to U.P. Shah, it probably represents the dance of Nīlāñjanā before king Ṛṣabhanātha.[143]

This relief is very important from the point of view that the *Jina* is depicted in anthropomorphic form. Though, the nude male torsos from Harappa and Lohanipur have been considered as *Jina* figures but iconographically it is not yet proved because the figures are mutilated from upper and lower part. (Plate 5.27)

Summary

Some of the main features of the Mathura art, prevailing during the Śuṅga period are described below; Sculptures were carved in low relief, Female and male figures are elaborately bejewelled; and their garments are apparently heavy, Sculptures do not show any emotions/facial expression, Like Bharhut sculptures, the sculptures of Mathura related to this period shows heavy coiffure styled test full and elaborate with the help of garlands, beads and costly cloths, Buddha was still represented by symbols, but in the list some more symbols are added i.e. the halo or Buddha's *prabhā-maṇḍala* and *bhikṣā pātra* in later period. According to Dr. R.C. Sharma, "The Śuṅga art of Mathura also portrays same features as found at Sanchi, Bodhgaya and Bharhut. Such as, its sculptural art is characterised by flat appearance, wearing of one sided turbans on male heads and simplicity of treatment. Figures were carved in low relief. Figures are lacking in three dimensional effects. More over figures are heavy and correct anatomical details and expressions like solace, sobriety, serenity, surprise, temptation etc are wanting."[144]

The size of the gateways, of the horizontal architraves and of the upright posts was much reduced at Mathura, though some specimens still shows the previous trends of making bigger size railing and cross bars.

Not a single stūpa belonging to this period has been traced at Mathura, but the remaining sculptures prove that Buddhist and Jain stūpa existed at Mathura.

Like early Buddhist art of Bharhut, Bodhgaya, and Sanchi stūpa No. I, II, II, and early phase of Buddhist art at Amaravati, stūpa do not display the iconic figure of Buddha. The early *chaitya* halls excavated at Bhaja, Kondane, Pitalkhora, Ajanta (caves No. 9, 10) Bedasa, Nasik and Karle, do not represent even the life events of Buddha.[145] Despite the fact that a Singhly text *Mahāvaṁśa* which speaks about the existence of a gold statue of Buddha, not a single statue of Buddha of early period has been found at the sites of Thuparama and Ruevanawaeli at Anuradhapuram.[146] The early Mathura art is not an exception of this trend and follows the same trend of depicting the Buddha in symbolic form. The symbols like *bodhi* tree, *chakra*, stūpa etc. A relief with two flying celestials garlanding a stūpa conveys the veneration of the demise of Buddha or stūpa worship. Figure of Buddha was still prevalent in the early Buddhist art of Mathura. Its possible cause, seems to be a canonical interdiction.[147]

Royal life, inside the palace also fascinated sculptor with the result a pillar is depicted in separate compartments, different modes of life of palace identified by Vogel in pillar of *'Kāmaloka'*.

A part of railing of 1st century BCE depicts, three full blown lotus flowers in the middle of the pillar and half medallion at top and bottom part of the railing pillar, unlike the Sanchi stūpa No. II, Bharhut and Bodhgaya railing where

only one full lotus is carved in the middle and two half lotus at top and bottom.[148] The medallions are carved with the lotus flower and other themes like a throne beneath a garlanded *chhatra*. It indicates that in early period there was no proper set up for carving the railing pillar. At Pāṭalīputra (Plate 5.28) railing pillar are carved with three full medallions and two half medallion, one on top and one at lower part. At Mathura, this railing is found at Kankali Tila and probably it was set up around a Jain stūpa. It is depicted with pattern of carving of railing pillar.

It probably seems that the hybridization of Indian and Western culture in the north-west around the beginning of Christian era might have affected the development of Buddhism art in that region. Mahāyāna Buddhism might have absorbed elements of western origin (Greek, Iranian).[149] But the architectural character is purely Indian and foreign influence is noticeable only in the Sculptural decoration, as we have also seen in the sculptural art of Sanchi stūpa No. I. The Mathura School of sculptures flourished at Mathura from Maurya, Śuṅga and Kuṣāṇa up to Gupta period, reveals unique experiments in the field of sculptural art.

Brahmanical deities in anthropomorphic form took place as early by 2nd century BCE, evident by the statue of Balarāma recovered from Jansuti Village for instance. This image was a natural result of the strong Bhāgavata movement and Mathura had been the radiating centre, since first century BCE. Several male busts representing the *Vṛshṇī* heroes were found in a shrine at Mora village. It is definitely in the style of the Śuṅga period. Patañjali also informs us about the existence of shrine, dedicated to Rāma and Keśava, i.e. Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa.

Scenes from the *Jātakas*, on the other hand, are, scarce. Some *Jātaka* were depicted probably for the first time such as *Dukkhopādāna Jātaka*. Some popular *Jātaka* were also depicted viz. *Assamukhī Jātaka*. *Jātakas* were depicted in 'monoscenic mode' of narration.

The size of the gateways of the horizontal architraves and of the upright posts was much reduced at Mathura. There is only one bigger example of a railing upright and of a couple of Śuṅga cross-bars which have been found; the one showing an elephant with riders in a medallion and the other with beautiful head wearing conspicuous head-dress. A very few example of big dimension pillar and *sūchī* were found from Mathura; for example pillar depicted *yakṣī* tying her belt and *sūchī* depicted elephant rider.

Merlon, Lotus medallion, rows of bell on coping stone, human face carved inside the lotus medallion are some of the features found at Bharhut sculptural art.

One may conclude that there is not much difference in the art of Sanchi and Bharhut and as found at the Mathura.

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सांकाश्यकेभ्यश्च पाटलिपुत्रकेभ्यश्च माथुरा अभिरुपतरा इति। *Mahābhāṣya*, 5.3.57.

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CHAPTER 6

Transitional Phase of Buddhist Art between Śuṅga and Kuṣāṇa Period

(Śaka Period to Vima Kadaphises i.e. circa 100 BCE to CE 77 Transitional Phase)

Introduction

The transitional phase begins with the transformation of symbols in to the iconic form. Major changes occurred in Buddhist as well as in Brahmanical and Jain art. Time of transition may be placed between 100 BCE to CE 77. During this period Mathura was under the control of Kṣatrapa King Hagān, Hagāmṣa, Mahākṣatrapa Rājuvula, Mahākshatrapa Śoḍāsa (circa 81 BCE) and Ghaṭāka. The Kṣatrapa during his rule patronised the art and architecture, as may be seen through the inscription of lion capital presently in the British Museum. After a short period of time Śuṅga were again revived at Mathura. (57 BCE to circa 20 BCE) Coins of king Gomitra and Viṣnumitra, etc. were found at Mathura and in its vicinity. In the early centuries Mathura came under the control of Kuṣāṇas, (1st CE) and they ruled up to CE 176. Two Kuṣāṇas ruler namely Kadaphises I, ruled at Mathura from CE 1st to CE 40 and Vima or Kadaphises II, CE 40 to CE 77. The works of art discussed in this chapter were produced when Mathura was governed by Kṣatrapas and Kuṣāṇas till coming of Vima Kadaphises. Kṣatrapas were of foreign extraction, apparently being either Scythian (Śaka) or Iranian (Pahlava) or a mixture of both.

The Lion capital inscription is referred as to an act of merit performed by the chief queen of Rājuvula, it is also recorded that the religious act perpetuated by them was done in honour of the whole of Sakastana (*Sarvasa Sakastanasapujae*), a region also known as Seistan in the southern Iran.[1] (Plate 6.1)

Rājuvula, a Kṣatrapa ruler of Mathura, is known from his coins and from inscriptions. He issued large number of coins found over a wide area between the river Indus and the Yamuna. His earlier coins were of debased silver with legends in corrupt Greek and Kharoṣṭhī script. These coins show the bust of the king and pallas hurling thunder bolt. His other coins were coated with lead and copper. In his later coins, he is styled as Mahākṣatrapa. The legend on these coins is in Brāhmī. The figure of Lakṣmī facing between symbols suggests growing Indianisation. During this period, Kṣatrapa ruler Śoḍāsa role was most important. His name is found in several epigraphs, some of which accompany sculpture, as well as in coins. Eight inscriptions mention the name of Śoḍāsa. For example his name occurs in stone with a date, the year seventy-two, on the Amohini Āyavati and in the Mathura lion capital inscription (may be dated about the year 60 of the old era, that is ± 69 years)[2] his name appears along with the names of other persons. It is believed by the scholars, that he was ruling over Mathura in the beginning of the CE first century.[3] His coins are in Brāhmī legends and confined to the region of Mathura only. His coin displays the Indian popular deity goddess Gaja Lakṣmī on the both side. These coins are stuck in copper and lead alloy and his name mentions as Kṣatrapa Śoḍāsa, son of Mahākṣatrapa followed by swastika, kṣatrapa Śoḍāsa, son of Rājuvula followed by swastika and Mahākṣatrapa Śoḍāsa followed by swastika.

Period of transition

According to S. P. Asthana 'Transitional Phase' of Buddhist art covers the period of late 1st century BCE to early CE 1st century or more precisely 50 BCE to CE 50.[4] As studied, it is before 100 BCE. Mathura was already a flourished art centre for all pantheons. Many sculptures belonging to different sects were carved during this period; such as figure of *yakṣa*, Balarāma and the sculptures related

to Jain, and Buddhist sects etc. Some sculptures were being carved in round and some in narratives were also carved specially for the Jain sect viz. Dance of 'Nīlāñjnā'. Accept Brahmanism the deities in Buddhism and Jain sects were worshiped through symbolically. For carving the narratives and symbolic art pattern of Mathura sculptors were still followed the tradition of Sanchi and Bharhut art.[5] This tradition was prevailed in Mathura upto 1st century BCE.

Now the major changes occurred in the Buddhist and Jain art of Mathura, strongly urge the devotees of these pantheons to compel the sculptors to carve the figures of deities like Buddha and *Tīrathaṅkaras*. Popularity of Brahmanical religion through idol worship also inspired the followers of both sects to adopt this formula of worship. Jain sect was more liberal in this regard, but for Buddhist sect; it was difficult task. Hīnayāna sect proved as a big barrier in accepting this path of worship.

According to R.C. Sharma "The popularity of other sects through image worship in the Mathura region compelled the Buddhist church to adopt this practice, as devotees were no more satisfied through symbols only and they longed for a direct vision of their deity (*Iṣta*). Mathura's atmosphere was favourable and commensurate with this innovation, and this great event had commenced in the pre-Kaniṣka period." [6]

The term transition

Transitional phase in terms of art can be described as transformation or change in form from one style to another. In this phase the old trends tends to be continued but at the same time new trends are inducted, which plays an important role in later period.

In the case of art of Mathura during the period BCE 100 to CE 78 new style, idioms, subjects, tastes, mode and means of narration were altered. Motifs were old, concepts were old, and themes were old but the objectives remained the same and hence the continuity as well as change can be seen at Mathura sculptural art in this particular phase. New and old traits of art; both were accepted by the traditionalist as well as by the new generation of the contemporary sculptors.

Transitional phase itself is a result of several socio-religious and politico-economic factors, occurred in this phase, Some of the factors responsible for the transition in Buddhist art are as follows:-

Causes of transition

Trade and Economic factor

During this period, the main centre of art activity was shifted from Pāṭalīputra to Mathura, though; other art centres like Sarnath and Kauśāmbī also existed and had played a significant role in the field of production of stone sculptures in later period. Mathura became an important centre of art, due to political circumstances in 2nd-1st centuries BCE economic and political authority gave patronage to art, from the east to west, Mathura developed as a metropolitan city in respect of trade and commerce, as it was near to the north-western powers who were entering in India, i.e., the heartland of northern India. Przyluski[7] says, "From Pāṭalīputra three great roads radiated to the frontiers of the empire the south western to Barygaza by Kauśāmbī and Ujjayanī, the northern to Nepal by Vaiśālī and Śrāvastī and the north-western, the longest, to Bactriana by Mathura and Upper valley of the Indus." From Mathura on the Yamuna lay a way westward overland to Sindh, Whence came large imports in horses and asses. Cunningham refers to finds of Apollodotus's coins in the lower Punjab, Sind, Gujarat, Karnal near Delhi, Roh, Pushkar, Amarkot, Mathura Bundelkhand and Taxila and Barygaza. So it may be concluded that the Mathura had a trade relation with Taxila and with other Greek ruling reginos.[8]

In the period of transition, Mathura became an important centre for Śakas. coins of Rājuvula and inscriptions of Śoḍāsa have been found in the region of Mathura. Mathura inscriptions,[9] shows how Śoḍāsa paid attention to the top most works of public welfare such as for tank, reservoir and a garden, which was implemented by his treasurer.

The changes started taking place at Mathura, due to extremely favourable conditions of trade, people earned surplus money and donated it for the cause of charity, art, and religious purpose. Several artists, sculptors were shifted from other art centres to Mathura and as a result, the new trends and styles, new form, new technique were applied to improve all kind of art and architectural methodology to

fulfil the demands of the elite people. The art of this period is under consideration and is marked by several new trends.

Invasions and interactions of foreigners

The constant invasions from north west, resulted, 1. Influence on the society, culture, art and architecture. 2. Influence on political and economical conditions of the then India. During this period political changes were far-reaching consequence which took place in the north-west India. Indo-Bactrian's, Parthians and Śakas were the main intruders, due to their invasions a new kind of interactions and contacts among the people of either side were formed and resulted in new style of art form. Various types of mythical animals were carved during this period. The invaders were also impressed by the religion and culture of India; and willingly adopted Buddhism, Vaiṣṇavism, Jainism, Śaivism and gave a new meaning to the sectarian art. They settled down in India and got diluted in Indian social system. In the art of Mathura; Scythian or Parthian caps, tunic, trousers, boots, belts and costumes also duly find their place. North-western India, thus became a melting pot of various foreign and indigenous cultural streams. Here, religion and art both combined to create a new cultural form, different from that of the Mauryans, although the trend to combine the indigenous elements with the foreign elements in art and other aspects of culture had started in the in coming of foreign elements in art and other aspects of culture started in the Mauryan, times because of Aśoka's good relations with the Hellenised west Asia and Egypt.[10]

Epigraphic evidences are strong enough to prove the commercial importance of Mathura. A Jain image inscription of Mathura speaks of the dedication by Dharmmasomā, the wife of a caravan-leader and it suggests that the caravan leader was prosperous in and gave this as gift.[11] Some more image inscriptions mentions, the donors name such as Jitāmitrā, mother of the perfumer, Kumārabhati a perfumer, Ārya Rudradāsa a banker (*śreṣṭhin*) son of banker Śivadāsa according to records, he built an elephant Naṁdiviśāla in the Mathura.

In Jain capital inscription of Mahārāja Devaputra Huviṣka, (*Lohika kāruka*) time show two metal workers Sūra and Gova dedicated the images, Naṁḍighośa a goldsmith is said to have set up tablets of homage in a Bhaṁḍira. Kuḥilya speaks of cotton industry of Mathura and this fact is later confirmed by Hiuen Tsang.[12] He writes, "The country of Mathura produced a fine striped cotton cloth and gold. The account of Fahien may also be noted and says, "The people of this country killed no living creature, drinks no wine, and ate no onion and garlic. There were no butchers or wine sellers markets." This statement suggests that the Jain and Buddhist sect have a great influence in the society of Mathura.

Social factor

Socio economic conditions also gave special impetus to art activity, and acted as motive force behind the changing pattern of art at Mathura. It was a flourishing commercial centre of trade and a meeting point far and wide routes. Being a prosperous and flourishing city, it also became prolific centre of art, supported and patronized by mercantile community who had special predilection for Buddhism. The art of Mathura depicts the refined taste of town elites. These town elites, *nāgarakas* are men who represented the intelligentsia of new social set up. These *nāgarakas* with their generous attitude towards life became the patron of a new art movement in Mathura.[13] In this connection D. Desai[14] expresses that, "The erotic themes received more romantic aura in the art of Mathura, Scenes, taken from the literary works, coupled with *madhupāna* scenes and representation of voluptuous beauties shown in various *Kūīdā vihāra* postures as well as in lyrically beautiful forms offer a feast for the eyes of the beholders"

The life represented in reliefs at Mathura, is mainly urban with all its pomp, splendour and colourfulness. Poses of figures also indicate a luxurious and lavish life style. In Mathura, we see women decorating themselves, playing with birds and even carrying a vanity box. The life style depicted here is closer to urban life style described in Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra*, a text addressed to the *nāgaraka*, man of town. [15] Mathura sculptors produced several themes and motifs of mundane interest as well as the anthropomorphic figure of Buddha.

Religious factor

The representation of the Buddha is in aniconic form instead of anthropomorphic, its special characteristic of early Buddhist art. The Buddhist community was well aware of the description of Buddha's personality from Pali literature and the thirty two auspicious physical marks. His

image did not appear for nearly four hundred years in early Buddhist art.[16]

Previous traditions

Aniconism in early Buddhist art was keeping with the contemporary attitude in higher religions and traditions. The Vedic religion has conceived their deities aniconically and sacrifice (*yajña*) through fire was an important and dominant part of worship.[17]

In the absence of deities the auspicious symbols played an important role and worshiped commonly by the all religion of the contemporary period. That is why Coomaraswamy has rightly called these symbols as an "iconography without icons".[18]

Canonical interdiction

This was one of the main factor, that the images of Buddha were absent in early Buddhist art. Though, the interdiction regarding Buddha image is not clearly mentioned in Pali literature. However, there are many indirect reference of the prohibition regarding Buddha's image in early Buddhist canon.

In Theravāda tradition, Buddha Śākyamuni was considered as a man who, due to his own efforts became the Buddha. The Theravādins did not regard Buddha as *lokottara* but attributed to him all powers and qualities of a *lokottara*.[19] Theravāda or the Sthaviravāda have a view that the Buddha was a human being but he possessed certain super human qualities. In *Dīgha Nikāya* the Buddha is described as an *arhat*, a fully awakened one, endowed with knowledge and good conduct, a happy preacher of the world and a teacher of men and gods.[20] However, been endowed with supernatural powers his physical body was subjected to physical law, i.e., man is mortal in the *nikāyas* the Buddha has called his body as *Putikāya* i.e. a body full of impure matters.

In Theravāda, the Buddha was also addressed as '*Bhagavān*' and worshipped due to his supernatural powers, achievements unsurpassed knowledge. Despite stress on *dhamma*, the ethical teachings and salvation through one's own efforts, devotion to wards the Buddha is similar as towards gods, this prevailed in early Buddhism.[21]

The Buddha always connected and recognized himself with the *dhamma*.[22] When monk Vakkali, on his death bed earnestly desired to see the Buddha in person, the blessed one said, "*Alaṃ Vakkali kiṃ te iminā pūtikāyena diṭṭhena. Yo kho Vakkali dhammam passati so mam passati, yo maṃ passati so dhaṃmam passati. Dhammaṃ hi Vakkali passanto maṃ passati maṃ passanto dhammam passati.*", i.e. He who sees *dhamma* sees me, he who sees me sees *dhamma*.[23]

The identification of *dhamma* with the Buddha in his life time and the sole guidance of *dhamma* to the Buddhist community after his *Mahāparinirvāṇa* placed the *dhamma* in an advantageous position, Buddha was supposed to be the *dhammakāya* (collection of *dhamma*) which is materially abstract, hence he could not be represented in anthropomorphic form.

To sum up, making image and doing worship did not become a part of the milieu in India. At least, not in the higher classes of society so far as the deities of higher tradition was concerned.[24]

But, in any case the aniconism in early Buddhist art should not be considered as image making incapability. According to Coomaraswamy, "The artists of pre Kuṣāṇa period were not incapable to carve the anthropomorphic images of Buddha. Craftsmen who were capable of producing Parkham *yakṣa* and Patna *yakṣī* images and explanation the relief at Bharhut and Sanchi would have had no difficulty in representing Buddha in human form, if they were required to do more than the art tradition, it was the Buddhist interdiction which was responsible for aniconic mode of representation in early Buddhist art.

Causes of the emergence of the Buddha image

There are some literary works which indicate that the figure of Buddha was already evolved in his time. The *Divyāvadāna* states that on the request of king Bimbisāra the Buddha allowed his shadow to fall upon a cloth to facilitate the painting of his figure on it.[25] Some other texts like *Korala Bimba*, *Mahāvaṁśa*, also support this view.[26] But these literary works belongs to the later period and hence are not reliable. The early Buddhist art i.e. from 3rd to 1st century BCE, not display the figure of Buddha instead he is depicted by the means of symbols. Mathura art too, followed this tradition; we don't find any anthropomorphic figure of Buddha in early Buddhist art of Mathura due to the injunction of Theravādins.[27]

The anthropomorphic image of Buddha came into existence during the 'phase of transition' in the Buddhist art of Mathura. A large number of images of the Buddha dated to Kaniṣka period proves that the Mathura sculptors begun to carve the figure of Buddha before the carving of these figures. What possible reasons made anthropomorphic form of Buddha? Buddha even gave his hair, nails, robes and other corporeal relics to make a stūpa over it, so that they could be worshiped it to satisfy devotional desire.[28] He allowed the pilgrimage tour for a Buddhist to his place of birth, (Lumbini) Bodhgaya, place of enlightenment, and place of preaching Sarnath and place of *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, Kuśīnagara.

Background for the emergence of iconic form of Buddha

Some of the early texts of Buddhists have logic background for the iconic creation and idol worship of Buddha. Few instances prove this fact; these are as follows:

1. The *Majjhimanikāya* mentions that the Buddha himself had said, "even those who have not entered the path are sure to get heaven if they have love and faith towards me.[29]
2. The word *Bhagvāna* occurred several times in early Buddhist literature and inscriptions as in the case of Piparahwa, Lumbini etc.[30]
3. Extreme devotion towards Buddha, *dharma* and *saḍgha* created a base for the Mahāsāṅghikās and ultimately to the iconic worship. A passage from *Majjhima Nikāya* states, "I dedicated myself to the *Bhagavān*, I dedicate myself to *dhamma* and the *saṅgha*, and my life I dedicate, dedicated indeed is myself, dedicated also is my life even until the end of my life. I go for refuge to the Buddha. The Buddha is my refuge, shelter, protection."[31]
4. Another instance, indicate deep reverence to Buddha, from the same text quotes: "Indeed I would see the teacher, I would see only the *Bhagavān*. And indeed I would see the *Sammāsambuddha*, I would see only the *Bhagavān*"[32]

There are many examples in early Buddhist text which shows deep reverence of devotees towards the Buddha which ultimately resulted in the iconic worship of Buddha.

Mahāsāṅghika/Sarvāstivāda

The Mahāsāṅghikā School came into existence just after the 2nd Buddhist council held at Vaiśālī. The school is also known as the precursor of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The main divergence made by this sect was to deify the Buddha and assert that the Buddha is *lokottara* and is connected externally with the worldly life.[33] The Mahāsāṅghika laid special emphasis on the Buddha-*bhakti* and enunciated that devotion and worship of the Buddha and of the stūpas which contain the Buddha's relics is the means not only to accomplish mundane happiness but also attain *nirvāna*. Here Buddha is endowed with unlimited divine powers; he untiringly endeavours to enlighten the beings, has unlimited compassion.[34] Therefore, with the rise of Mahāsāṅghikas the Buddha gradually turned to be a God and the tradition of stress on the Buddha *bhakti* to achieve one's goal came into existence.

Likewise, Sarvāstivāda branched off from the Theravāda before or after third Buddhist council held at Pāṭalīputra. The Sarvāstivādins enjoyed their high position in Mathura, Gandhāra and Kashmira regions. Unlike the Theravādins the Sarvāstivādins attribute to the Buddha as divine, sometime as super divine powers.[35] We find that the Savastivādins, on the one hand conceived the Buddha as a human being and on the other hand they glorified the Buddha and laid stress devotion. During the reign of the Maurya emperor Asoka, the Sarvāstivādins left Magadha. They settled down in Mathura and later on they went to Kashmir, Gandhāra, Udyāna and spread their doctrine in those regions. They were kept in touch with their fellow workers of Madhyadeśa, particularly of Mathura. They were only responsible for the development of Bodhisattva cult. On account of its broad principles of humanism, Sarvāstivāda was embraced by ruling classes, the business communities, scholars, and general public. Several foreigners, who ruled over the parts of this country adopted Sarvāstivāda in preference to other *nikāyas*. It was the branch of Mahisāsakas. They were responsible for the changes occurred in Buddhist art because their interpretation of Buddhism was in consonance due to broad-based ethics of humanism. Mathura being an important centre of the

Sarvāstivādin sect of Buddhism played an important role as a art centre for fostering Buddhism, particularly, among the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa rulers.

The well known stone figure of lion capital from Mathura bears several inscriptions in Kharoṣṭhī of the two Śaka rulers, Rājuvula and Śoḍāṣa. This capital of a pillar is now preserved in the British Museum, London.[36] It seems, that the idea to have an image of humanised Buddha had the sectarian support from a section probably of the Sarvāstivāda school of Buddhism.

Avadāna literature/other Buddhist literature

The *Avadāna* literature, which is supposed to be the works of Sarvāstivādins,[37] reflects a full fledged idea of devotionalism. The *Avadāna Śataka* and the *Divyāvadāna* are the most prominent *Avadānas* which by their narratives and legends inculcate devotion to the Buddha and to other holy personages. The *Divyāvadāna* begins with the Mahāyānistic benediction, Om, adoration to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas", though it belongs, as a whole, to Hīnayāna.[38]

The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*,[39] another early Mahāyānic texts also speaks of Buddha *bhakti,* cult of relics and image worship. The text mentions that, who ever offer stūpas, or who make or cause to be make images, carvings, coloured images, children playing, who draw Buddha images or those who make offering to those images of various sorts, will achieve the Buddha-path, through the use of those expedient devices of the Buddha. These texts gave a boost to the thought of *bhakti* and extreme devotion among the Buddhist followers, which ultimately resulted to the iconic worship of Buddha. O.C.Gangoly is rightly expressed that," It is reasonable to conclude that the earliest of these texts sanctioned and recommend image worship, had probably, composed, during the early part of the pre-Christian century (circa 1-50 BCE). And there is nothing inherently improbable in the first image of the Buddha having been carved or painted some time before 50 BCE.[40]

Aśokāvadāna, an early Sanskrit text of Sarvāstivāda origin is significant to show the justification of the act of making the figure of Buddha. An episode in the text, narrates that Upagupta who is stated to have converted Aśoka to Buddhism is also said to have subjugated Māra like Buddha. One day, when Upagupta was preaching the Law amidst huge gathering in the city of Mathura, Māra, the god of temptation, showered strings of pearls amongst the assembled people to divert their attention. As a result, none could realise the truth. Next day too, during his discourse there was again a rain of gold and real pearls. Upagupta's preaching remained effect less. On the third day when Upagupta began to expound the Dharma, Māra caused celestial damsels to appear there and to sing and dance with playing of divine instruments. Consequently, the audience felt attracted towards the heavenly nymphs and their celestial music. Māra was delighted at this sight and placed a flower-garland around the head of *Sthavira* Upagupta. Then the great monk thought of subjugating Māra and created a flower garland out of the skeletons of a snake, a dog, and a man. The garland was put around the head of Māra, after wearing it, found that instead of garland there were skeletons of snake, dog, and man tied to his head, neck, and ears. Māra tried to remove the bones from his body but could not succeed. He then flew up into the sky and sought the help of God like Indra, Rudra, Viṣṇu Yama, Varuṇa and other divinities, but they expressed their helplessness in this matter. In the end, he approached to Brahmā who advised him to resort to Upagupta to attain the deliverance. Māra then realized the greatness of the Buddha. Māra, having seen that a disciple of *Tathāgata* is more powerful than Brahmā expressed his respect in following words, "Who could measure the power of Buddha? If he wanted to vent his anger on me, what could he not do? It was his piety that he did not vent his anger on me....." Consequently, with a feeling of deep repentance, Māra prostrated at the feet of Upagupta, who agreed to remove the skeletal fetters from his body but took a promise and placed the condition that thereafter Māra would not disturb the *bhikṣus* and he would also show to Upagupta the human form of Buddha. Monk had seen only the *dharamakāya* of Buddha. Māra, agreed to obey the commands but warned the monk that he would not pay any respect to the God of Temptation in the form as Buddha, otherwise he would destroy him as he has no powers to accept the homage is actually intended for Buddha. Māra then disappeared and reappeared, shortly in the grab of Buddha as an actor with thirty two signs of a great man from a forest. It was most pleasing to see he looked like Buddha with a halo; accompanied by Sāriputra, Ānanda, and other disciples etc. Seeing this pleasant view, Upagupta paid homage to Māra who was appeared in the form of

Buddha. The monk further told that when people worship earthen images, they actually bow to the god, represented by the icons and not earthen form itself, and his icon, therefore, was similar to this kind of worship Upagupta never thought of Māra and had, in fact, bowed only to *Sugata* or Buddha. Māra then came in his actual form and invited people to listen to Upagupta's discourse.[41]

The Changing Concept of *Kāya*

Generally, the word *kāya* stands for body. But in Buddhist terminology *kāya* means the three or four fold bodies of the Buddha. The concept of *kāya* theory was perhaps evolved as a part of justification for image worship. The description of the *kāya* concept can be traced even in early Buddhist literature. Actually different schools of Buddhist thought conceived Buddha in different ways and perhaps due to the convenience of the interpretation of their own view they divided the conception of the Buddha's body into two or three parts viz., 1. *Dhammakāya* 2.*Rūpa* or *nirmāṇkāya* and 3. *Sambhogakāya.*

Theravādins evolved the concept of twofold bodies of Buddha viz. *rūpa* or *nirmāṇakaya*, and *dhammakāya.* The *dhamma kāya* is considered to be a real body of the Buddha which can not be seen as it has no form. Rūpa or *nirmāṇakāya* is the created body in which the Buddha rendered his services for the welfare of human beings. But the Buddha called his body as *putikāya* i.e., a body full of impure matters.[42]

According to Mahāyanā ideas, the Bodhisattvas after acquiring all the necessary *dharmas* and practicing *prajñāpārmitā* becomes *Saṁbuddha.* He rendered services to the beings of all *Lokadhatus* (worlds) of the ten corners at all times. The body through which the Buddha rendered services is known as *Nirmāṇa kāya.* Here, we find the Mahāyānic concept of *rūpakāya* as different from the Theravādins who called it *putikāya.* The Mahāyānist define the concept of Sambhogakāya in this way: Bodhisattvas after attaining the *bodhi* by means of the *Prajñāpārmitā*, take a body endowed with thirty-two major and eighty minor signs with a view to preaching the doctrines of Mahāyāna to the Bodhisattvas and at the same time to arouse joy in their minds, delight and love for the excellent *dharma.* This type of the Buddha's body is known as *Sambhogakāya.* The *Sambhogakāya* is so called because it is shown as special acquisition of the Buddha on account of merits accumulated in several lives.[43] and he enjoys the bliss of knowledge through this body.

However, some of the Mahāyānic works do no distinguish the *rūpa* or *nirmāṇkāya* from *Sambhogakāya.*[44] About the *dhrmakāya*, the Mahāyānists say that it is devoid of all marks and is inexpressible. It possesses the eternal, real and unlimited *gunas* and it has neither *chitta*, nor *rūpa*, and it is not different from them.[45] In other words Therāvādins termed Buddha's body as *putikāya* and stressed more on *dhammakāya.* Whereas Mahāyānists gave more importance to *Sambhogakāya* of Buddha which resulted the iconic worship of Buddha. Gradually, the Buddha became an object of adoration and meditation in Buddhism as shown in the formula of adoration to Buddha (*namo tassa bhagavato Arhato samma sambuddhassa).* The term *"Buddhānusmūiti"* in early Buddhist literature had four meanings, a.) Meditation on the virtues of Buddha, b.) Hearing the name of the Buddha, c.) Repetition of the name of the Buddha and d.) Meditation on the figure of the Buddha.[46]

The *Aṣḥasahasrikāprajñāpārmitā Sūtra* one of the earliest Mahāyānik texts reflects devotionalism as a medium to gain merit and this can be done by worshipping the Buddha image, as the text explicitly mentioned, that the purpose of making an image was to cause men to gain merit by seeing the Buddha (*Buddhadarśanapunya*) and nothing else.[47] To sum up, with the emergence of Mahāsāṅghikas, a revolutionary change took place in Buddhism. They made the Buddha *lokottara* and laid special emphasis on the Buddha-*bhakti.*

Bhakti Movement in Bhāgavat sect

The Brahmanical cult could have been familiar with image worship by the 4th century BCE. The *bhakti* movement, which originated in Vaiṣṇava sect, is known to have influenced Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is said that it was the Brāhmanic *bhakti* movement which permeated the idea of devotionalism in Buddhism. The Brahmanical *bhakti* movement was at its peak during in the Śuṅga period. Image of Balarāma was already made dated 2nd century BCE or before; recovered from the village Junsuti now in Lucknow Museum. It was the time when Heleodorous installed a *Garuḍa* capital as a token of his respect for Vāsudeva at Vidisa in early 2nd century BCE and calls himself as a bhāgavata and addresses his deity as *Bhagavān* Vāsudeva.

Under the impact of this movement, the worship of Śiva, Skaḍda, Visākha, Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva came into vogue about the 2nd century BCE.[48]

The ancient site of Mādhyamika had revealed an inscription recording the existence of *Nārāyaṇa Vāṭaka* which also belongs to the 2nd century BCE. The inscription on a large stone slab, acquired from the village Morā in Mathura records that the images of five Vṛṣṇi heroes namely Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Sāmba were dedicated during the time of Śoḍāṣa i.e. in the 1st century BCE.

The Buddha image was, thus, a result of the movement and had strong urge among the lay worshippers who wanted the iconic representation of Buddha which they could adore and worship. It may be conclude that the emergence of the Buddha figure was the result of a strong *bhakti* movement.

Popularity of image of early cult

The image of *yakṣa yakṣī, nāga, nāgi* among the general people is also credited for their contribution to the emergence of the Buddha images.[49] The early images of Buddha, shows great affinity with these images.[50] The images of Hindu divinities, Jain *Tīrthaṅkaras* and the Buddha/Bodhisattva came later into existence respectively.[51] It seems that when the images of *yakṣas* gained popularity among masses, people of Brahmanical sect might have felt danger of their faith and subsequently sanctioned the permission for making images of Hindu divinities in human form to maintain their position, when the images of Hindu divinities became more popular among the people than both Jain and Buddhists also started making the images of *Tīrthaṅkaras* and Buddha/ Bodhisattvas in order to counteract the rising popularity of Hindu religion.

Jain art : From symbol to icon

Study of Jain art is worth here in the contest of development of Buddhist art from Śuṅga to the time of Kaniṣka as Bṃhler rightly says that, "the ancient art of the Jains did not differ materially from that of the Buddhists. Both sects used the same ornaments, the same artistic motives and the same sacred symbols, differences occurring chiefly in minor points only. The cause of this agreement is in all probability, not that adherents of one sect imitated those of the other, but both drew on the national art of India and employed the same artists." [52]

Laufer has stressed the fact that Buddhism might have been strongly influenced by Jainism.[53] therefore, we see that both religions show a close relation in their expressions of art.

In this period, not only the anthropomorphic form of deities like Buddha, *Tīrthaṅkara* and other Brahmanical divinities like *Śivaliṅga,* Agni, etc. were emerged but several new traits in the field of sculptural art were also evolved. Several western art motif took place in Mathura art for example; grape vine creaper, fish tailed, long necked and elongated bodied mythical animal, mythical animals having different types of incised shapes on the body, *chaitya* arch motif for decoration, new auspicious symbols like flying conch shell, deities and devotees wearing starched *uttarīya,* architectural member i.e. tympanum added for the first time. Major changes occurred in the hair style and drapery, style of *uṣṇīṣa* also changed.

We have seen that Brahmanism, Jain and Buddhist sects did not yet use images for worship. The tradition of installation of *Āyāgpaṭṭas* was existed at Mathura in Jain sect. These slabs were installed round the stūpa to receive offerings and worship. A bas relief carved in the spandrel of a tympanum of the early 1st century A.D depicts *Āyāgapaṭṭas* lying flat upon pedestals next to a stūpa. In the '*Nārayaṇa Vāṭaka*' inscription from Ghosuṇḍī there is mention of a *Pūjā-śilā* which corresponds to an *Āyāgapaṭṭa.* It suggests that they prevailed both in Brāhmanism and Jainism alike. The *Āyāgapaṭṭa* are the perfect example of Mathura workmanship.

According to V.S. Agrawala, "The strong belief in the significance of symbols and powerful influence, which the symbols exercised on religious worship are made manifest on these *Āyāgapaṭṭas* as nowhere else. They belonged to a transitional period when symbols were as much meaningful as the *Tīrhaṅkara* image and the two were equally balanced in harmony with each other."

Āyāgapaṭṭa with the carvings of symbols

Śimitrā *Āyāgapaṭṭa* is the earliest known example of an *Āyāgapaṭṭa* (named after a donor Śimitrā) It is carved with a *bhadrāsana* symbolising the presence of a venerated figure who is physically absent. Other symbols are also depicted with this symbol.[54] **(Plate 6.2)**

An *Āyāgapaṭṭa* donated by the wife of Okaraṇa for the sake of honouring the *arhats*. Auspicious symbols viz. conch (*śaḍkha*), empty seat (*bhadrāsana*), swastika, *nandyāvartas* are depicted with animals like bull, winged lion and a rhinoceros; circumambulating the edge of the *Āyāgapaṭṭa* in a clockwise direction. This *Āyāgapaṭṭa* is also inscribed and upper portion of *Āyāgapaṭṭa* is mutilated. (SMP, No. Arch 5811).[55] **(Plate 6.3)**

Like Jainism Buddhist also worshipped *śilāpaṭṭas*. One tusika *Āyāgapaṭṭa* presently only one fourth of the original slab is left carved with *nandyāvarta*, *bhadrāsana*, lotus, *śrīvatsa* and swastika. (GMM, No. J.260)

The Bhikhu Phagula śilā from Kauśāmbī, which is mutilated and only the lower left quarter of which remains, is carved with the footprints of the Buddha, its each toe have a swastika and the big toe has a *nandyāvarta* and lotus. It symbolises as representing the presence of the Buddha. **(Plate 6.4)**

The Shimala Museum *Āyāgapaṭṭa* (SMHPS, No. J.247) and mutilated *Āyāgapaṭṭa* fragment from Mathura carved with *chakra* (GMM, No.15.569) is also important from the point of view to worship symbols instead of icons. Inscription engraved on it records the donation of the slab by the monk Phagula at the Ghoṣitārāma monastery. These all *Āyāgapaṭṭas* can be placed in 150 to 75 century BCE on the basis of palaeographic and art style. A much mutilated and worn *Āyāgapaṭṭa* fragment from Mathura depicted swastika with its four fish-tail arms and Aśoka flowers. **(Plate 6.5)** (SML, No. J.257)

The Mātharaka *Āyāgapaṭṭa*, depicted sixteen spooked *chakra* in the centre surrounded by three round compartment showing sixteen *triratna* symbols, eight divine maidens (*aṣṭadikkumārikā*) floating in the air and offering garlands and lotuses and the third round showing a coiled heavy garland, and in the four corners supported by atlantes of half human body and half fish tail, bearing the weight of whole figure. In the square frame is depicted *śrīvatsa*, *triratna*, swastika etc. A pair of devotee having winged lion body and bust of human is offering garlands. Overall depiction is very mathematically arranged. In all auspicious motifs *chakra* have been given prominence, placed in the centre part of the *Āyāgapaṭṭa*. All these auspicious marks including *chakra* is very familiar in early Buddhist art. Main deference is the slab in which they depicted. In early Buddhist art they are depicted on railing pillar copings architraves and *sūchīs*. **(Plate 6.6)** (SML, No. J. 248)

Āyāgapaṭṭa with the carvings of icons

The Dhanamitra *Āyāgapaṭṭas* depicts *Jina* figure in the centre of *Āyāgapaṭṭa*. This *Āyāgapaṭṭa* is depicted '*swastikapaṭṭa*' in which a swastika motif is depicted round the figure of a *Tīrthaṅkara* seated cross-legged in *dhyāna-mudrā* under a *chhatra* in the central medallion encircled by four *triratna* symbols. Inside the four arms of the swastika are depicted auspicious symbols like *mina mithuna*, *vaijayantī* (triangle headed standard) swastika and *śrīvatsa*. In the outer round band are carved four auspicious objects viz. *bodhi* tree, stūpa, a *Tīrthaṅkara* being worshipped by flying celestials. In the corners of the slab is depicted four bejewelled *yakṣas* (*mahoragas* or great serpent) having human body and legs of fish, holding the weight of slab on the upraised hands. Here the auspicious symbols are depicted as usual but in a new setup. In this square slab this arrangement of depiction of auspicious symbols with the depiction of two Jain figure is very compact and magnificent. Overall depiction is extremely remarkable. **(Plate 6.7)**

An *Āyāgapaṭṭa* now in Ferenc Hopp Museum[56] recovered from Mathura is very important in terms of central figure of *Jina* seated in *dhyānmudrā*. Figure has wide open eyes, neck with incised curves, broad shoulders, and deep naval. *Jina* is seated in *dhyān mudrā*. A garlanded *chhatra* is placed over its head. **(Plate 6.8)**

Āyāgapaṭṭa with the carvings of stūpa

Two more *Āyāgapaṭṭa* is known for the depiction of Jain stūpa very akin to Buddhist stūpa. It is known as *chaityapaṭṭa*. One of these *Āyāgapaṭṭas* is depicted in a stūpa with a *sopāna toraṇa vedikā* two side pillars, *śālabhañjikā* figures and an elongated stūpa. **(Plate 6.9)**

Another slab is depicted a stūpa surrounded by a railing and an ornamented gateway approached by means of the flight of steps. The stūpa is flanked by two pillars the one topped by a wheel and other by a lion.

By the second decade of the 1st century BCE, mainly from the time of Śoḍāsa the sculptural style of the late phase of CE 1st century had changed into a new mode. Śoḍāsa appears to be an independent ruler of Mathura who

used the Sanskrit title *svāmi* (Lord), as well as the title *Mahākṣatrapa*, which is derived from the Iranian title meaning "governor" (Kṣatrapa). His father Rājuvula was apparently a governor of the Mathura region under an Indo-Scythian overlord, based towards the northwest, but he seems to have achieved a degree of independence, which was maintained by Śoḍāsa.

Āyāgapaṭṭa with the carvings of female divinity

Some *āyāgapaṭṭas* carved during this phase includes the Amohini Āyavati, **(Plate 6.10)** the Pārśvanātha *āyāgapaṭṭa*, and the Nāṃdighoṣa *āyāgapaṭṭa*. An *āyāgapaṭṭa* inscribed with the date during the reign of Śoḍāsa. (year 15 A.D.) On the Amohini Āyavati the large female figure standing frontally under a chandraśālā arch, her right hand held up in *abhaya-mudrā* while left hand held akimbo, attended by the female attendants holding a fly-whisk and an umbrella, established in the year 42 of Śoḍāsa. This *Āyāgapaṭṭa* is called the Amohini Āyavati; Amohini being the name of the donor and Āyavati probably being a synonym for *āyāgapaṭṭa*, used in the inscription. The female figure in the centre probably represents an earlier example, of devotion to a female divinity within a Jain context. The hair style of deity and attendant figure is conspicuous. Later on, this hair style had a small bun above the forehead, became very popular. One other thing which is noticeable is a *chaitya* arch type design which also became a favourite sign to be carved on railing pillar and other architectural member of the stūpa, by the sculptor.

The Pārśvanātha *āyāgapaṭṭa* (CE 14-15) **(Plate 6.11)** is unique as in the centre of which is carved a seated Pārśvanātha by the five-hooded snake above his head flanked by two necked monks (*ardhaphālaka* monks). The *Jina* is in *dhyāna mudra*. He is seated in padmāsana posture on a raised pedestal. Around the central circle is a large concentric ring filled with four *nandyāvartas*.

Nāṃdighoṣa *āyāgapaṭṭa* is recovered from Ahichchhatra, U.P. (CE 14-15) **(Plate 6.12)** depicted grapevine in the square outer band. In side it is four *triratna* in four directions and inside the four *triratna* is a round band. The depiction in side of the band is now eroded.

Another *āyāgapaṭṭa* recovered from Kankali Tila now in British Museum (CE 14-15) depicted a *Jina* figure in *dhyana mudrā* in outer square band and flying celestials are depicted carrying garlands and other things in a basket to offer the *Jina*. A *pūrṇa kuṁbha* depicted inside the round band is very beautifully.

Sihanādika *āyāgapaṭṭa* from Kankali Tila (CE 25-50, now in NMD) depicted in square band, a *chakra* pillar and an elephant pillar Both the pillar on either side of square band; is fluted, capitals is of winged lions seated back to back and base of pillar is a *kuṁbha* is a typical pattern of Śuṅga pillar. A *mina-mithuna*, *bhadrāsana*, *śrīvatsa*, *pūrṇa kumbha* basket full of garland and geometric design is depicted in square band. In side the square, is carved four *triratna* and in between is carved acanthus leaves. Inside a round medallion, a figure of *Jina* is seated on *bhadrāsana* in *dhyān mudrā* above his head is placed a *chhatra*.

Chaubiāpādā *āyāgapaṭṭa* is recovered from Mathura now in Los Angeles County Museum of Art depicted a *Jina* figure in round medallion and two devotees on either side of *Jina* figure standing with folded hand. The second band is depicted four *triratna* symbols stylistically designed by the two *makaras*. Third outer band is depicted with flying celestials holding a garland and wearing a starched *uttarīya* which is blowing in the air. Other symbols, depicted include *bhadrāsana*, *tri ratana*, *chaitya vūkṣa* surrounded with the railing and a *pātra*. Lower half part of the *āyāgapaṭṭa* is mutilated. Two *āyāgapaṭṭas* dated CE 75 to CE 100. both depicts Jain stūpa. Śivayaśa *āyāgapaṭṭa* is mutilated and only lower, one third of the original plaque remained. Both depicts a stūpa elevated upon a high plinth and surrounded by a *vedikā*, a flight of stairs leads to a decorated *toraṇa* with tree architraves carved with flowers and geometric design. The stūpa is vertically elongated and surrounded by three railings, one at the base part and two in the middle part. At the top of the stūpa are a *harmikā* and a *chhatra* with two garlands, blowing in the air on the either side of it. Two flying *ardhaphālaka* monks are venerating stūpa on the either side of it is two winged celestial deities are also venerating stūpa with garlands, depicted on either side of the stūpa. Two *śālabhañjika* figures are standing in a way that one hand is touching to the stūpa and one hand is placed akimbo. Two pillars on either side of stūpa is having *ghaṭa* base, fluted pillar shaft, capital of *chakra* and lion respectively. On the plinth part, under the *chaitya* arched gate are a two figures on each side.

All these examples of *āyāgapaṭṭas* prove that the art depicted in these art objects is fabulous. At the initial stages the symbols like *bhadrāsana, śrīvatsa, triratna, mīna yugma,* swastika etc. were carved and later on a tiny *Jina* figure with or without devotees were carved with these symbols. These *āyāgapaṭṭas* depicted a high quality of art work. They are decorated by following geometric design such as square band inside circular bands. In the circular and geometric design, the *Jina* figures and symbols are carved in a balancing manner. Grape vine are depicted in some of the *āyāgapaṭṭas* in beautiful manner.

Tympanum (depicting symbols and icons)

Now in this period a new architectural feature comes in the form of tympanum.[57] (Vertical triangular space forming the centre of a pediment and also similar space over a door between the lintel and the arch.{Greek tympanum}). At Bharhut and Sanchi we have seen *toraṇa* with architrave which was generally erected at the four entrance of the stūpa. But at Mathura, tympanum the new architectural feature was used at the entrance of the monastery, *chaitya* or at the entrance of some other religious building in both Jain and Buddhist pantheon, which was the carved part of vertical triangular space forming the centre of a pediment and also similar space over a door between the lintel and arch.

This tympanum is recovered from the Jain monastic site of Kankali Tila in Mathura **(Plate 6.13)**. Each side of the tympanum is carved and divided in to three arched section, and the triangular corner on the left and right side of the both side of tympanum were also carved. Here, the half of the tympanum showing obverse and reverse side. Side-A of tympanum from the top triangular part depicted devotees both male and female are coming towards the Jain stūpa with flowers or garlands. The typical bulging/starched *uttarīya*; which is the main characteristics of this period, can be seen. A Jain stūpa and three *āyāgapaṭṭa* lying on high pedestal are seen on the one side of the stūpa. A cart in the corner is also depicted. First, arch from the top depicts rider on lion and dragon faced long necked mythical animal, at corner is a depiction of a *makara* and a man turning towards the *makara*. A female attendant is holding a *chhatra* standing beside a deity which is now mutilated. The second arch depicts a *makara* in the corner and a man turning towards the *makara*, a griffin rider, a horse cart with riders, two female devotees, one holding an umbrella and other is holding a lotus flowers standing besides a deity; in the third arch is depicted a *makara* in the corner with a man turning towards him, three fishes tailed griffin riders with elongated body and neck, two devotees standing with folded hand besides the deity whose figure is mutilated. The arch stripes are also decorated with floral design. Stūpa and *āyāgapaṭṭas* is venerated by six devotees. **(Plate 6.14)**

The opposite side of tympanum is also carved with the same depiction as the front side of tympanum. On the top of the tympanum are standing devotees holding garlands and other kind of offerings in the tray. First arch depicts a religious procession on bullock cart and devotes with offerings. Second arch depicts flying devotees with flowers in their hands for offerings Third arch depicts a camel and bullock cart procession towards some religious place, two female devotees holding *chhatra* are standing by the deity, who is sitting on a high pedestal, the figure is now lost.

A tympanum of later period, probably the early 3rd century A.D. recovered from Mathura now in Lucknow Museum depicts three arches, wherein the central object of worship is a stūpa, *Tīrthaṅkara*, or goddess in the top, middle, and lower registers, respectively is flanked by two devotees in a seating posture with folded hands. Through this depiction one can conjecture the depiction of mutilated portion of tympanum. **(Plate 6.15)**

Brahmanical divinities of the period under consideration

The period of 2nd and 1st century BCE had witnessed the growth of earlier forms and gave birth to many new anthropomorphic forms of gods of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sects. Its concrete evidence is in the form of coins. At Bodhgaya the Sūrya in anthropomorphic form has already taken shape. Some coins issued by foreign rulers of north-western India were struck with several new anthropomorphic forms of Brahmanical divinities. For example, on the reverse of the coins of Plato the figure of Sūrya in form of a radiating deity driving a chariot drawn by four horses is note worthy. The coins of Greek rulers like Hippostratus, Pantaleon and Peucolus depicts a goddess with lotus or cornucopia in the right hand, which appears to be Lakṣmī. Some Ujjanī coins, in the hinterland of India bear Gaja Lakṣmī. On the reverse of the coins of Agathocles we have the *Aśvamukhī yakṣī*. Maues had on his coins Śiva standing to front with a long

trident in the left hand. In another series of his coins Śiva is shown standing in front, with a long trident in the left hand. In other series of his coins Śiva is shown with club and a trident on shoulder, striding to the left. On a few coins of Agathocles (probably 2nd century BCE) from Ai-Khanum in northern Afghanistan, we have the beautiful representations of Balarāma with a plough or *hala*, and a *mūsala* and Vāsudeva with a *chakra* and a *śaḍkha*. Mues also issued coins depicting Lakṣmī sitting on lotus. Azilises issued the coins depicting Gaja Lakṣmī. It may be concluded that in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, owing the impact of the *bhakti* movement in Brahmanical sect, several deities were transformed into anthropomorphic forms. But these anthropomorphic forms show strong influence of Hellenistic Style and features. (Plate 6.16)

At Mathura, the stone sculptures of Balarāma; follows the style of *yakṣa* has already been carved by the Mathura sculptor. During this point of time only in Brahmanical pantheon conceived the idea of creation of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava gods in the anthropomorphic form. The Ghosuṇdi inscription of Pārāśarīputra Gājāyana was found near Nagari district, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan also proves that as early as 2nd century BCE, the sculptures of Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva were established and were worshiped as a unconquered and supreme lords (*Anihata* and *Sarveśvara*) in side a stone railing or wall.[58]

1. तेन गाजायनेन पाराशरी पुत्रेण स.....
2. जिना भगवद्भ्यां संकर्षण वासुदेवाभ्यां
3. .....भ्यां पूजाशिला प्रकारो नारायण वाटेका.....

In the year 1911, sculptures of two male torsos were unearthed from a mound near the village of Mora, nearly nine kilometres west of Mathura city. The mound at Morā in which they were discovered was located next to a well in which an inscription was carved during the time of Śoḍāsa was also discovered. The inscription of the Morā well was discovered in the year 1882 by Alexander Cunningham which reads, "...of the son of Mahakṣatrapa Rājūvula, *svāmi*, the images of the holy *paṃcavīras* of the *Vṛṣṇis*....the stone shrine...whom the magnificent matchless stone house of Toṣā was erected and maintained...five objects of adoration made of stone, radiant, as it were with highest beauty..." The inscription records the installation in a stone temple of images of the five holy *Vṛṣṇis* heroes." The two Morā male torsos were mutilated and do not have heads, arms and legs. The torso is still indicates a proportionate and good quality of workmanship within the style, and their workmanship clearly expresses that sculptors had improved a lot from Parkhambh *yakṣa* to the torsos of *Vṛṣaṇis*. (GMM No. E. 22 and E. 21)

An interesting freeze, probably, a part from the architrave, recovered from Bhuteshvara narrates the worship of *Śivaliṅga* by garland bearing mythical animal having human face. The *Śivaliṅga* had been interestingly installed under a tree inside a railing. It is influenced by the carving of Śuṅga style of *bodhi vūaksa* inside the railing. This interesting relief suggests that *Śaiva* sect was also flourishing and to popularise the sect, the *Śivaliṅgs*, were installed under the tree surrounded by the railing. Two human faced mythical animal with wings are depicted from the both the side carrying a garland. (Plate 6.17)

Buddhist art of transitional phase

Due to socio-cultural and other reasons, during the beginning of the early centuries of the Christian era, the growth of Buddhism underwent a process of change, philosophically and artistically. These changes were mainly responsible for the innovation and popularisation of Buddha's depiction in human form and modification in the corresponding aspects of the faith. S.P.Gupta and S.P. Asthana,[59] in their book, *Elements of Indian Art*, had expressed their views very beautifully in this regard by saying that, "how long the Puritanism of Buddhism could last when the Buddhist zealots saw the people flocking around these anthropomorphic gods of the non-Buddhist faiths. By the latter half of the first century BCE they overlooked the instructions of their own Master by flouting his instructions and made him reborn as a young handsome *yogī*, sitting on pedestal and wearing a single piece of the upper garment covering one shoulder called *Saṁghāṭī*." One of the remarkable characteristics of the Buddhist art of Mathura during the phase of transition is that it took the initiative to transform symbolism to human form. Entire process of evolution may be divided in to three stages;

1. Representation of symbols (Early phase of Buddhist art at Mathura)
2. Representation of symbols and emergence of tiny human figures

(Depiction of both at the same time: transitional phase of Buddhist art at Mathura)

3. Symbols entirely dominated by the human figures of Buddha/and

Bodhisattva. (Developed stage of Buddhist art at Mathura.)

In third stage, the coins of Kaniṣka represent a real Buddha figure along with the caption and dated stone sculptures of Buddha and Bodhisattva were carved at Mathura.

Some of the early sculptures showing the transition phase was carved during this period under consideration are as follows:

Buddha/Bodhisattva in sitting posture

Seated Buddha figures shows great affinity with the seated *Jina* figures, which were first carved in the *āyāgapaṭṭas*. The *āyāgapaṭṭas* carved with the figures of *Jina* can be dated during the reign of Śoḍāsa. The Amohini tablet set up during the reign of Śoḍāsa is a dated specimen and has a great affinity with the *āyāgapaṭṭas* which were carved with the *Jina* figures on stylistic and palaeographic grounds. These *āyāgapaṭṭas* also belonged to the transitional phase, as discussed earlier. As the symbols were prevalent and *Jina* figures were carved surrounded by various symbols. It is worth to state that the *Jina* figures played as a model role in the formation of the seated figures of Buddha/Bodhisattva.

Īsāpur railing pillar: Lokapālas offer Alms Bowls to the Buddha *Śakyamuni*

This relief is well known for the depiction of tiny figure of Buddha. It was first dated to a pre-Kuṣāṇa period by J. E. Van Lohuizen-de Leew on the basis of style[60] Scholars like V.S. Agrawala, R.C. Sharma also attributed it to an earliest example of the Buddha image. Some of them dated it to before 1st century BCE and some place this relief to CE 1st century. But most of the scholars agree to this point that it belonged the period before Kaniṣka. (GMM, No. H.12)

The figure of Buddha is shown seated upon a high pedestal supported by lions and surrounded by four *Lokapālas* offering bowls. The figure of Buddha is in sitting posture and one hand i.e. upraised in *abhaya mudrā*. One hand is placed over on the thigh. He is sited in *paḍmāsna*. Hair is styled as a bun over head. He is wearing one sided *saṃghāti* and cloths are diaphanous. Figure of Buddha is some what squeezed in a small place of pillar relief. Each of the four *lokapālas* holds a bowl in their hand. The sitting posture and body carved here is akin to the sited *Jina* figure carved in the *āyāgapaṭṭas*. Pedestal is similar to the stūpa altar and the pedestal of the *Jina* figure. Another early feature is the position of the left hand which has not yet shows its place on the knee as seen in the Image of Katra Buddha. Slender figure of *lokapālas* resembles with the figure carved on the early *toraṇas* and tympanum. According to R.C Sharma, the sculpture may be dated to the end of 1st century BCE. It was first identified by J. Ph. Vogel [61]

At Sanchi, "Offering of the bowls by the *Lokapālas*" scene is depicted in square relief of a *toraṇa* pillar. Railing is making a border in both the reliefs. In both the relief, four *Lokpālas* are shown holding bowls. Mathura relief does not show flying deities holding garlands. *Bodhi* tree and *Āsana* is replaced by the iconic figure of the Buddha seated on the high pedestal. Bellowing *uttarīya*, small and more ornamented *uṣṇīṣa*, elongated figures of *lokapāls*, *harmikā* type *Āsana* supported by two lions on either side makes a difference from the relief depicting the same incident from the life of Buddha at Sanchi, stūpa No. I. **(Plate 6.18 & 6.19)**

Tympanum from Jamalpur Tila

This part of a tympanum also belongs to the period of transition. The pattern of tympanum is akin to the tympanum of Jain's divided in three semi round arches. The depiction on the first arch is *uṣṇīṣa* or head gear of Buddha placed on a small pedestal and two flying deities wearing bulging *uttarīya* offering garlands and flowers. Second arch depicts a Bodhisattva wearing necklace, earrings, bangles and bulging *uttarīya* on hand placed on thigh and one in the posture of *abhaya mudrā*. He is flanked by flying deities offering flowers and garland. Third arch is mutilated. On other side B depicts bowl worshipping by flying deities and second arch depicts a figure of Buddha with a halo having scalloped border. The *kapardā* is looking elongated and hand is in *abhaya mudrā* and one is placed on thigh. Third arch depicts, meditating Bodhisattva having *ūrṇa* mark between the eyebrows, halo having scalloped border, wearing *uṣṇīṣa*, necklaces, earrings and bangles. Behind the figure is a depiction of *Bodhi* tree which is remarkable in

the sense that it depicts the figure of Buddha, before he attained the enlightenment. Smiling face of the flying deities can be seen clearly. *Makara,* as usual is depicted in the starting point of arch. The triangular corner depicts an eagle for the first time may be an impact of Persian art; there it is treated as most favourite bird carved in the stone sculptures before the Christian era. Smiling face of flying deities, figure of eagle in the corner of tympanum, tiny Buddha and Bodhisattva figures with *ūrṇā* mark, worship of Buddha's headgear and bowl, all are the features of the transitional phase. (NMD, No. I.1.) **(Plate 6.20a, b)**

Architrave representing symbols on one and Buddha on the other side

An architrave of a gateway is very significant from various reasons. It is carved on the both sides and is divided in to five sections. **(Plate 6.21)** (GMM, No. M.3.) The obverse in the centre shows the *bodhi* tree inside a building. Branches of the tree are seen emerging out of the *bodhighara.* **(Plate 6.22a,b)** Here it is interesting to note that the appearance is like a kind of wall covering the *bodhi* tree from all side. The wall is turning five times and in the middle of wall is a simple rectangular gate without arch through which stem of *bodhi* tree is visible. Two arches are visible on the upper portion of wall, facing each other. Branches full of leaves, peeping out from small square windows of the *bodhighara.*

Where as at Sanchi the *bodhighara* is a simple open pavilion supported by pillars, covering seat of Buddha symbolises by three *triratna* symbols.

The *bodhi* shrine on each side is flanked by devotees, six in numbers carrying garlands and to the right side is depiction of *chakra* worshiped by two devotees standing with folded hands. The *chakra* is placed over the four lions seated back to back like the Aśokan pillar of Sarnath. On the left side is depiction of a stūpa which is carved in a style with elongated and many multi-storeyed buildings. **(Plate 6.23a, b)**

Here the depiction of stūpa is very interesting. It has a lower railing surmounted by four arched gateways, one on the back side and is not visible. Second tyres also have railing with distinct floral design associated with four petals, again surmounted by four arched shape gateways. Third story again had a same depiction, and the upper part of stūpa is covered with the round roof having a kind of angles in six directions two is on the back side and is not visible. Stūpa architecture here shows a great change in this relief. If we compare this stūpa with Sanchi it shows tremendous development in the stūpa architecture. In the earlier period, four *toraṇa* was made only on ground level. But in this relief, four *toraṇas* can be notices on the each story of the stūpa. More over the *harmikā* are now replaced by a rounded roof. Unfortunately, we have not seen with any stūpa having this type of architecture. It is clear that this kind of stūpa with extremely well developed architecture once survived at the ancient city of Mathura probably in the circa 1st century BCE - CE 1st century.

The beam on the two ends bears the figure of the mythical animal with fish tailed and human bust. This mythical animal had replaced the *makara* which was a favourite subject of the carver from the time of Aśoka, when the sculptor carved it on the arched gateway of Lomas Ṛṣi cave. **(Plate 6.24a, b)** Hairdo is suggested that it has a face of a woman.

The reverse side presents the scene of Indra's homage to the Buddha in the Indraśāla cave. The tiny figure of the Buddha is in seated posture the hand is in *abhaya mudrā* one hand is placed on the thigh. **(Plate 6.25a.)** He is depicted inside the cave. Indra wearing a high crown standing with folded hands with two female divinities. Besides, the figure of female, are depicted three elephants, middle elephant is having a decorated cover on its back and having prominent teeth, may be identified as Airāvata, Indra's vehicle. On the right side is depicted Pañchaśikha a divine musician or *Gandhrava* with six devotees carrying garland in their hand for veneration of the Buddha. At both the corners it is depicted a *pūrṇa kalaśa* with full of lotus flowers, leaf and buds in it. This architrave is depicting the tiny figure of Buddha in one hand and symbols on the other hand proved that the sculptures on this architrave belong to the transitional phase. His legs and feet are very clumsy. He is wearing a thin garment across the chest and covers the left shoulder whereas right shoulder is bare. The navel is visible through the garment. His right hand is lifted in *abhaya mudrā* and other hand is placed over the thigh with the palm downwards. A small *uṣṇīṣa* is visible on the head.

According to Van Lohuizen De-Leeuw, "the piece dates back the same time as the *āyāgapaṭṭas* is strengthened further by some other points of resemblance which the piece shows

with the *āyāgapaṭṭas*; the masculine and feminine figures, represented at both sides of the relief as adorants, have a shawl thrown round their shoulders, spreads widely from the neck, and falling down in as out pleats, where as it is blown away slightly from the body. It is the same shawl we see worn by the flying celestials above the Buddha of Katra in later times, without fluttering pleat beneath. The same dress is also shown by the figures on the tympanum from Mathura....The cross-bar dates from the transition-period between symbols and representation in human form of the Master, as do the *āyāgapaṭṭas* which also represent *Jina* figures as well as symbols."

At Sanchi **(Plate 6.25b)** this incident is depicted in a simple form the deities including Indra and pañchśikha are standing with folded hands. Cave has Lomas Ṛṣi cave like entrance and an empty thrown symbolising the meditating Buddha. Here at Sanchi deities are wearing simple lower garment ie. *dhotī* and *uttarīya* and big turban, and usual jewellery such as earrings, bangles and necklace, but anklets are absent whereas at Mathura deities/devotees are wearing bulging *uttarīya*, and dhoti with extra bulging cloth tied round the waist the rounded fillet can be seen in one of waist. According to R.C. Sharma the sculpture should be placed in the end of the first century BCE or the beginning of the CE 1st century. **(Plate 6.26)**

Śuddhodana visiting Buddha

In another relief is depicted king Śuddhodana visiting Buddha. **(Plate 6.27)** Earlier it was wrongly identified as Vardhamāna by Fuhrer. In this relief Buddha and king almost wear a same kind of cloth i.e. a dhoti and bellowing *uttarīya* covering one shoulder. The king is wearing a turban, it is more ornamented compared to the turban wore by the figures of Sanchi and Bharhut. A small *uṣṇīṣa* is marked on the front of the head of Buddha which is a coil of hairs. The rest of the head is plain and smooth. *Uṣṇīṣa* of Buddha is very similar to the *uṣṇīṣa yakṣas*. **(Plate 6.29 a, b)** Behind the head of the Buddha is a large *prabhāmaṅdal* (aureole) which seems to be left smooth; we do not yet see the scalloped border, so typical later on. In my opinion the figure of Buddha resembles more to the figure of Bāvāri (*Jātaka*) **(Plate 6.28)** carved in a medallion with the central figure of Bāvāri). The style of drapery, postures of hand which is in both the case in *abhaya mudrā* is almost same. Proportionate figure of Buddha halo has (*prabhāmaṅdala*) and *uṣṇīṣa* is different from the figure of Bāvāri. According to V.S. Agrawala, "the halo round the head was accepted as the suitable sign of the glory of the Buddha. The conception of the halo was borrowed from Zoroastrian deities on coins, round whose head it depicted the divine glory hvarr (Sanskrit:*svara-maṇḍala*) of Ahura Mazda." It shows progress in sculptural art from Śuṅga period to the phase of transition. Van Lohuizen, suggested in this respect that the Buddha image was derived from the king as there is a close similarity between the figure of the king and the Buddha. The folds and bellowing form of the scarf, position of hands, modelling of the body etc. is almost same.[62] (SML, No. J.531)

Inscribed pedestal of Bodhisattva image

For identification of this pedestal, we greatly owe to R.C. Sharma. It is a fragmentary sculpture discovered at Galteśwar near Katra in the Mathura city only the left leg, right foot and left hand of the Bodhisattva, along with the left foot, is placed an attendant on the right side are extant. Pedestal of sited figure shows a striding winged lion and a devotee standing in profile with folded hand. Left hand of the Buddha (?) is placed over the thigh with fingers open. Right foot is marked with the *chakra* symbol. Four line inscriptions inform that female worshippers setup this Bodhisattva image and that it was dedicated to the Sarvāstivādin monks for their well being. More significant, is that, it mentions the name of some Kṣatrapa.[63] (GMM, No. A. 66)

V.S. Agrawala also put it in the 1st century BCE. For the first time R.C. Sharma had pointed out that it is the only Buddhist figure unearthed at Mathura which records the word Kṣatrapa. The Kharoṣṭhī inscription of the famous lion capital recovered from the Saptaūṣi site of Mathura records that the followers of the Sarvāstivādin sect of Buddhism enjoyed royal favour in the pre-Kuṣāṇa era. And the two Kṣatrapa king Rājuvula and Śoḍāṣa patronized those most. It is probable that one of these Kṣatrapa rulers is referred in the Bodhisattva image under discussion. And the sculpture can be fixed somewhere between the middle of is 1st century BCE and the middle of the CE 1st century. **(Plate 6.30)**

(उपासि) कये नंदाये क्षत्रप (स) (बो) धि सत्व विस ..... तरे
सवस्तानं हित सु (खार्थ ।) सविरथः ग्वाफ दियानं परि ग्रहे [64]

Govindnagar Ṛśyaśṛṅga pillar

This pillar is recovered from Bhutesvar, and the *Jātaka* story of Ṛśyaśṛṅga carved on this pillar is identified by R.C. Sharma. He suggested that the date of its carvings should be the 1st century BCE or the early CE 1st century.[65]

Four panels are carved on each side of the Govindnagar Ṛśyaśṛṅga pillar. One side of the pillar is badly eroded. Other side is in intact form. Four panels are carved on each side of the Ṛśyaśṛṅga pillar first contains a scene of the veneration of the Buddha's turban which he removed after he leave the worldly life. *Uṣṇīs* is placed on a high pedestal flanked by the two devotees wearing bellowing dhoti. Top panel contain a scene of the veneration of the Buddha's turban. In this panel, the style of turban is of post Śuṅga type. This type of turban had worn by male figures before and after the period of Kuṣāṇas for more than hundred years. The turban is placed on a high pedestal very similar to the pedestal depicted tiny figure on the architrave discussed before. Behind the turban, is visible a scalloped hallo. It is earliest known depiction of scalloped halo during the time of Śoḍāsa. The halo behind the standing Buddha figure and behind the turban is again an impact of western art. (GMM, No. 76.40)

Because the Ṛśyaśṛṅga was the son of a doe and an ascetic he was born in the form of human boy, but has a single horn over his forehead. He was brought up by his father. Second panel shows the ascetic with the doe in front of his hermitage. Third panel is depicted, the birth of Ṛśyaśṛṅga. And in the last one is depicted, the nymph Alambusā holding a tray with probably some fruits/ eatables and giving it to the Ṛśyaśṛṅga in the presence of Indra wearing big diadem and bellowing scarf.[66] The arch motif became very popular as a decorative motif in the railing pillar, coping and other sculptures. (Plate 6.31a, b, c, d)

Standing image of Bodhisattva

For carving the standing statues of Buddha/ Bodhisattva (Plate 6.32) sculptor had an ideal model of yakṣa before him. In this category a Bodhisattva image may be mentioned here. The hands posture, styles of drapery, modelling of the body, jewellery all things are very similar to the *yakṣa* images. The decoration between the hand which is in *abhaya mudrā* (like the hands of *yakṣa* images, which generally was raised up to be in *abhaya mudrā* or to hold a *chāuri*) and chest is clearly indicates its purpose to give strength to the upraised hand. The posture of hand which is in *abhaya* is slightly tilted and not frontal. The 'U' shaped necklace, bulging and pleated *uttarīya*, deep naval, and stylish girdle all are suggesting great affinity between the yakṣa images and the figure under consideration. The figure shows heaviness like in the early figures of *yakṣas*. Moreover the left leg is shown projecting forward; like wise as it is found in the statues of *yakṣa*. (SML, No.B.12B)

The bellowing scarf seems to be western motif it can be traced in the sculptures from Hekateion at Lagina, Caria, belonging to the 2nd century BCE.[67] The representation of the Bodhisattva figure has unmistakable impact of the *yakṣa* iconography as Coomaraswamy also suggested that the standing Buddha images were in succession to the *yakṣa* statues.

Summary

Emergence the Buddha in iconic form

Early Buddhist art is aniconic and only in this period the Buddha appears in iconic form in late 1st century BCE or early CE 1st century. It is one of the main characteristics of the Mathura school of art; it took the initiative to transform symbols into figure of Buddha. Initially, it was carved in a tiny shape having affinity with the *Jina* figures but later on independent and big statue of Buddha/ Bodhisattva were carved with more developed form with the *mahāpuruṣa lakṣaṇa* initially with the marks like *chakra* on palm elongated earlobes, *ūrṇā* and halo etc.

Jain sculptural art is also developed at Mathura

After studying all these sculptures, we find that, in this period of transition at Mathura, the community of Jain was also large like Buddhists. Number of Jain antiquities and sculptures were unearthed from here; especially from the Kankali Tila. Jain art was found in more developed form *āyāgapaṭṭas* are the remarkable art objects. It is, for the first time they carved it so magnificently. Ghosundi inscription also mentions the *śilāpaṭṭas* carved for Bhāgvata sect, but no remains of the *śilāpaṭṭas* are discovered with the high merits which are found in Jain *āyāgapaṭṭa*. No other art centre had produced such beautifully arranged symbols and other figures in *āyāgapaṭṭa*. Its production was

confined to only in Mathura. In later period Buddhist also carved *āyāgapaṭṭas* at Amaravati.

Jain art of Mathura is unique in several ways. For the first time the beautiful depiction of monks, this is rare in the early and in transitional phase in Buddhist art. Later in Kuṣāṇa period, Buddhist monks also found their place in sculptural art. The figures of the *Ardhphālaka* monks are carved by Mathura sculptor very elegantly. In Buddhist art we do not find any depiction of monk, only one depiction of Buddhist monk in the relief of "Erāpata Nāga' have been found at Bharhut. Though, Brahmanical ascetic carved many times without a hitch, for example the depiction of "*dīghatapasī*". No depiction of Buddhist monk found at Mathura. In Ṛṣyaśṛṅga *Jātaka* the ascetics are shown in the form of Brahmanical ascetics.

But in Jain art *ardhaphālaka* monks **(Plate 6.33a, b)** (who carries a small cloth known as *cholapaṭṭa* in their fore arms to hide their nudity) are beautifully depicted a number of times. In one such example monks are depicted near the pond carrying "*rajoharaṇa*" (whisk brooms used by the Jain monks to sweep living creatures out of the path before them as they walk).

But a great achievement of Buddhist art during this period was the emergence of iconic figure of the Buddha. The situation changed in the reign of king Kaniṣka. During this period number of Buddhist sculptures of Mathura school increased, because he patronised Buddhism.

Buddha's figure was an out come of the Indian concept of *yogī* and *chakravartin.*

The basic elements of the Buddhist icons viz. *padmāsana, dhyānamudrā, nāsāgradṛṣḥi simhāsana, chāmargrāhiṇī* celestials showering flowers *ūrṇā, uṣṇīṣa* etc., shows the Indian concept of *yogī* and *chakravartin* which is deeply rooted in Indian culture and the figure of Buddha was the outcome of this idea.[68]

Mythical animals in new form

In India art we get *īhāmṛga* in the form of winged lions, beaked lions, horned lions, winged bulls, bull with elephant face, crocodile with fish tail, stag with fish tail, sea monsters etc. from the Śuṅga - Sātavāhana - Bactrian period it self, starting in the 2nd century BCE. Such fabulous figures were earlier found in Greek, Persian and Assyrian art from the 7th- 6th century BCE. As the decorative elements of pillars, copings, beams, etc. we find them repeatedly occurring in Buddhists and Jain art. In the Greek art there are centaurs with horse body and male or female human heads. In India similar images are called *kinnara* and *kinnarī* who are heavenly beings. In Indian art there are also *vayāla* figures in which two images from the animal world are crossed lions body but parrots face.)[69] But in this transitional phase the mythical animal influenced by the western art depicted in more elongated form. It seems that the Chinese art also influenced the Indian art and for the first time we get the legs of *mahoraga* shaped as dragon. According to Sonya Rahie Quintanila, "These dragons may suggest an early acquaintance with art of China, in which the dragon was commonly represented from Neolithic times influence of art could be foreign visitors coming in through trade routes India between China and Rome, via India, by the late 1st century BCE.[70] One more thing is to be noted here that some of the mythical animal carved here is carved with the circular, triangular, flowers shaped of incised marks. But in this respect further research is wanted. Likewise *makaras* were essentially carved in the end of architrave, is now replaced by the mermaid. Due to the western art influence, in the transitional phase grape wine became favourite subject of sculptor to decorate the sculpture especially for making the boarder. **(Plate 6.34 a, b, c.)**

Brahmanical pantheon was also influenced by the Buddhist art

Owing to the popularity of Brahmanical (Śiva and Vaiṣṇava) gods number of foreigner also converted their religion in to the Brahmanical pantheon. Śiva *liṅga* worship became popular. A relief from Mathura shows Śaka worshiping the Śiva *liṅga* installed on the high platform. They are shown dressed up in tunic and wearing boots and offering garland and flowers. Buddhist art also influenced it. One of the architrave recovered from Mathura shows a Śiva *liṅga* installed under a tree and surrounded by a square railing. And two winged celestials are offering the garland to it. It is depicted in the same manner as we found a *bodhi* tree surrounded by a railing carved in the early Buddhist art. **(Plate 6.35 a, b, c.)**

Strait *toraṇa* architrave

In the transitional phase the architraves of *toraṇas* becomes straight. At Sanchi and Bharhut the architraves were slightly in arched form. Even the architrave belong

to the Śuṅga period recover from Mathura have slightly arched shape. **(Plate 6.36a, b)**

Influence of western Art

Due the constant interaction with the foreigners by trade routes or by other reasons the art of transitional phase is more influenced by the western art. In a Buddhist tympanum, in the triangular corner an eagle is depicted, which was favourite bird in the Persian art, before the Christian era. Soon it was carved holding snakes in its beak in the form of Garuḍa. **(Plate 6.37a, b)**

The disappearance of figures of Goddess Lakṣmī and trees of previous Buddhas

Gaja Lakṣmī was the favourite deity in the early Buddhist art. She was depicted in the art of Sanchi, Bodhgaya, Bharhut, Pitalkhora, Bhaja and in several other, Early Buddhist sites is now disappeared in the art of Mathura. Though some of the coins of Kṣatrapa kings depict the Goddess Lakṣmī, but in sculptural art she is almost disappeared. In the Kaniṣka period, she had been depicted standing on lotus pressing her breast as a symbol of fertility, but her Gaja Lakṣmī form is disappeared.

The presentation of *Jātaka* and scenes from the life of Buddha widely differ from Sanchi especially in view of the emergence of the Buddha Image

In the transitional phase, life scenes of Buddha became more popular though *Jātaka* were also carved by the sculptor, but in a restricted number. The Buddhist art was glorified by the anthropomorphic form of Buddha. Some of the *Jātakas* were carved on pillar railing in continuous, narrative mode, for example Ṛśyaśṛṇga *Jātaka.*

Buddha was being carved with the signs of *Mahāpuruṣa Lakṣaṇa*

Buddha/Bodhisattva figures were initially lacking the *Mahāpuruṣa Lakṣaṇa* but in a short period of time during the transitional phase the figures were carved with elongated earlobes, *chakra* on palm etc.

Changes in the style of drapery, jewellery and hairdo

Lot of changes occurred in drapery. It seems bellowing scarf or *uttarīya* becomes popular among the elite class of society. It was a long unstitched cloth covering both the shoulder. Probably made of cotton as the area Mathura was known for the production of cotton in the ancient time. Jewellery, carved in sculptures is less in number and light in weight as compared to the Śuṅga period. Female figures are shown with distinctive type of round and heavy anklets. Male figure are some times shown with more ornamented *uṣṇīṣa.* Some of the figure depicts as if they have combed their hair on back side. It was more ornamented and tastefully designed. Like wise girdle are more decorated than the earlier period. Bellowing scarf was popular among female and male both. Female figures are shown draped in thin dhoti and long fillets falls between the legs now disappear or become short, compare to the female figures of earlier period. **(Plate 6.38a, b, c)**

Coping stone carved with the new ideas

At Mathura, in the transitional phase new subjects became popular. Coping stone now, carved with social scenes like the scene of garden. Inscriptions of the time of Śoḍāṣa informs us that garden, ponds, well were made as a charity. Social subjects became popular. In one of the coping two persons are shown sitting in a garden surrounded by a wall having fencing of criss-cross design. Garden is depicted with a number of trees including banana. Banana trees also became a favourite subject for sculptors. Marlon and lotus buds are replaced by heavy garland, grape vine and atlantes. **(Plate 6.39a, b)**

Following changes occurred in the carving of coping:

1. Lotus creepers blowing jewellery and fruits like jack fruit, mango etc. are now being replaced by undulating heavy garlands carried by atlantes.
2. Merlon and lotus motifs on the coping are absent.
3. The coping are carved with social and *Jātakas* scenes, now replaced with the scenes of garden and man made ponds.

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CHAPTER 7

Development and Transformation of Buddhist Art from Śuṅga to Kuṣāṇa Period

The observations regarding the development/ transformation of Buddhist art from Śuṅga to Kuṣāṇa period

Through the ravages of time and space the traditional art of expression in form of sculptures has passed from various changes. The continuity of the themes remained same and the style of execution of sculptural art had witnessed various changes like diffusion, evolution and transformation. These changes have occurred due to various reasons, as mentioned in the previous chapter, but the foremost reason is that the Mathura became the magneto of trade and commerce, because of its geographical and geological setting. This fact is also supported by the text *Lalitavistara;* it is mentioned in the text that "The city of Mathura is prosperous, enhanced, beneficial, generous and full of men. It is the capital of Subāhu, king of Śūrasena, of the dynasty of Kaṃsa".[1] To meet the demand of the donors, guild's and religious institutions, sculptors from various neighbourhood regions were deputed to meet with the demand, since they were having different style of hands but one mind, the continuous practice of the sculptors in this regard made it possible to transform early Buddhist style of art in to a typical "Mathura School of Art"

The figure of Buddha/Bodhisattva[2] *Jātakas*, scenes from the life of Buddha viz. birth of Buddha and Buddha's descent from heaven at Saṁkāśya etc., symbolic worship, sacred symbols, mundane scenes, figures of *śālabhañjikā,* were now carved in a new style.

Scenes from literature

Sculptures based on the popular text of contemporary period was also carved, such as scene from the *Mrichchhakaṭika* written by, Śūdraka, and *Saundarānanda* written by Aśvaghoṣa[3] are worth mentioning, for example; a pillar having two sections, were carved with two toilet scenes. In the upper panel a man, Nanda is seen arranging the hair of Sundarī, who is looking at mirror. A female attendant holds a toilet basket. In the lower section Sundarī puts on a necklace looking into the mirror, which is held by a dwarf female attendant. To her left side stands a man carrying a toilet basket. These reliefs represent a scene as described by the contemporary poet Aśvaghoṣa in his epic *Saundrānanda.* The verse related to the scene is described in the text is as follows:

विभूषयामास ततःप्रियां स सिषेविषुस्तां न मृजावहार्थं ।
स्वेनेव रूपेण विभूषिता हि विभूषानामपि भूषणं सा ॥12 ॥
दत्त्वाथ सा दर्पणमस्य हस्ते ममाग्रतो धारय तावदेनं ।
विशेषकं यावदहं करोमीत्युवाच कान्तं स च तं बभार ॥13 ॥

During the rule of Kaniṣka at Mathura especially from the time of Huviṣka and Vāsudeva; Gandhāra art influenced Mathura in various ways. Though in the time of Śaka's local people came in contact with the foreigners, but Kuṣāṇa were responsible for the deep rooted foreign influence that can be marked well in the art of this period. New rulers, new environment and new traditions were the possible factor to the remarkable art of sculptures of this period. This causes the great changes in Mathura art of Kuṣāṇa period. During this period Mathura witnessed the golden days of its sculptural art, and produced beautiful and realistic sculptures. Sculptor produced thousands of sculpture to fulfil the demands from the distant places.

In respect of Buddhist art, following changes occurred in the sculptural art of Mathura in comparison to the art of earlier phase i.e. Śuṅga period including "Transitional Phase".

Standing figures of Buddha/Bodhisattva

Standing figures of Buddha/Bodhisattva carved in this period had some distinct features compared to the early standing figure belonging to the transitional phase. These characteristics includes; the large halo, if survived, having scalloped border, left hand is held akimbo, chest is broad, the drapery is same as seen in the seated figures, a waist band fastening the lower garment, the lower garment reaches below the knee.

In the early standing figures, a noteworthy point is that, the object carved between the legs of the figure; which is some times illustrated as lion, cluster of flowers, turban or lower garment falling between the legs. The Sarnath Bodhisattva figure represents lion in between the legs, which connotes the supremacy of the Buddha also known as *Śākya Siṁha* i.e. Lion among the *Śākyas*. The early seated figures of Buddha/Bodhisattva also depict lion on the seat of the figure. The Sarnath pillar of Aśoka denotes the same meaning. The other popular motif carved by the sculptor between the legs of standing figures is cluster of lotus buds or a full blown lotus assuming the shape of the turban. The cluster buds or lotus denotes the purity of Buddha. The turban carved between the legs denotes the incident of his renunciation from worldly life to ascetic, when Buddha renounced he cut off his hair and threw away along with his turban in the air, later caught by Indra who installed it in his palace for worship. Therefore the turban shown between the legs of the figures symbolises the supremacy of Buddha over Kingship. Sometimes sculptor had carved simply the lower garment hanging below between the knees.[4] The gap between the right hand (which is in *abhaya mudrā)* and chest is filled with a floral design up to the chest to give strength to the upraised hand.

For example, a life-size statue of Bodhisattva, executed in red spotted sand stone at Mathura of Kuṣāṇa period. The image was acquired from Kauśāmbī and now displayed in Allahabad Museum.[5] The head and right hand is completely broken. The left hand is clenched and holds at the waist a long scarf which goes below and then falls on the right side. He wears a lower garment which reaches below to his knees and is supported by a girdle which is knotted at the left side with its two ends falling down. A thin garment is placed over the left shoulder, which also covers arm and chest. The folds of the drapery are indicated by deep incised lines. Between the legs are kept five lotus buds tied together, and at the top of these is found a full blown lotus. A full blown lotus is also seen by the side of left leg of the figure. In the pedestal below there is an inscription which reads as[6]:

I. *(Ma)h(ā)rājasya Kaṇ(i) shkasa saṁva (tsa)r(e)2h(e) 2di 8 Bodhisatavo (tvaṁ) pra (ti).*

II. *(shṭha) payati bhikuṇī Buddhamitrā trepit(i)kā bhagavato Buddhsa cha(ṁ)kame.*

(In the 2nd year of Maharāja Kaniṣka, on the 8th day of the 2nd (month) of *Hemanta*, (Buddhist) nun Buddhamitrā, who is well versed in the *Tripiṭaka*, sets up (the image of) Bodhisattva at the promenade of Lord Buddha.) It may be observed that this was the earliest known image of a Bodhisattva prepared during the reign of Kaniṣka. An image carved during the 3rd year of his reign was, however, discovered at the Sarnath excavations.[7]

The colossal statue found from Sarnath is dated to the 3rd reignal year of Kaniṣka, is another example of Buddha/ Bodhisattva figure of the time of Kaniṣka. The Bodhisattva is in standing posture wearing *ekānsikasanghāḥī* with left hand held akimbo and resting on waist right arm is missing. Lower garment is little below up to the knees. The cluster of lotus buds is replaced by a figure of lion. According to the Vogel, it was carved as a cognizance of Buddha.[8]

The figure of Bodhisattva was protected by a large stone *chhatra* with the help of a shaft pierced in the hole of the *chhatra*. It is carved with number of symbols viz., *triratna*, *matsyamithuna*, *śrīvatsa*, *maṅgalakalaśa*, honeysuckle motif, *sapakṣaśankha*, *phalapātra*, *mālāra* (cup of leaves containing properly arranged garlands) along with the depiction of *īhamṛga*.[9] Here, it is imperative to mention that some of the early symbols can be located easily from the Buddhist sites, like Sanchi and Bharhut. But some symbols such as *sapakṣaśankha*, *phalapātra*, *mālāra* were carved earlier on the *āyāgapaṭṭa* now frequently accepted by sculptor as their favorite motif. **(Plate 7.1a, b)**

Seated figures of Buddha/Bodhisattva

In the period which is under consideration, the Buddha/ Bodhisattva statues were carved in high relief against a stele. A seated figure of Buddha (Inscribed as Bodhisattva) is the famous seated image from Katra mound. These three figures suggests that before carving these images sculptor has thoroughly practiced to achieve this level of perfection

and these early images were not suddenly created by the sculptors during the period of maturity i.e., CE 1st century-CE 2nd century. R.C. Sharma had rightly expressed that the evolution was a natural process and it had a fairly early background of at least a century before the accession of Kaniṣka.[9]

Seated figures of Buddha produced by the sculptor during this period are in advanced stage, as they were carved in high relief, but not carved in round, features are clear and expressive, the halo have scalloped boarder, on the back part of the statues the depiction of pīpal tree with clear and beautiful leafs are carved, The upper two corners are engraved with flying celestials holding garlands in their hands, earlobes of figure is not so elongated as it found in the later period of Kuṣāṇa art, navel is deeply carved, eyes are wide open, between the eyebrows is seen an *ūrṇa* mark, and smiling face. The figure is flanked by an acolyte on each side, carrying flywhisk, the top hair on the head of the Buddha is shaped like a snail shell (*kaparḍa*), the right hand is raised in *abhaya mudrā* reaching above the shoulders and profile in position, left part of body is covered by garment and left arm shows thick and heavy pleats, Lower part of the legs is not covered, the frills of the garment falls on the seat, chest is broad and stiff, seat is shaped as an alter and usually carved with the lions in profile on both the corners. The pedestal supported by lions is considered to be of Scythian origin.[10]

In the figure of Buddha from transitional phase, the left hand has not yet reached the knee level as seen in the Katra Buddha figure and other seated images related to this period. Earlier, figures of Buddha were not having halo; *kaparḍa* is more prominent in the case of Katra Buddha figure and *ūrṇā* also depicted in this figure. **(Plate 7.2a,b)**

In the period of Huviṣka, seated Buddha figure is marked with the introduction of some new features which are not seen in the sculptures, discussed above. For example: seated Buddha image from Ahicchatra, shows some new traits such as the halo bears a beaded line in addition to the scalloped border, top knot is higher, Vajrapāṇi wearing *udīcyaveṣa* is carved on the right and Padmapāṇi on the left, is also introduced, the pedestal shows worship of Bodhi tree[11] The figure of Vajrapāṇi is shown wearing northern dress a flat turban with cress-cross motif and a scarf round the neck which has a close affinity with the motif seen on the statue of so-called Hercules with Nemean lion from Mathura[12] Thunder bolt is in right hand. Later on, in the later phase of Huviṣka the figure of Buddha shows the Gandhāra impact and shows the drapery covers both the shoulder for example, Aynor Buddha figure.[13] A figure of seated Buddha from Govindnagar, with the left hand supporting the hem of the garment while the right hand raised in the protection pose. The palm is decorated with a *chakra* and filling between the fingers gives the effect of webbed hand; *Jālānagulikara,* the hair on the head has schematic curls with a protuberance above, the eyebrows are carved with projecting semicircular lines, the halo; as indicated by some traces, was carved with a full-blown lotus, shooting arrows and a scalloped edge.[14]

Architectural Fragment depicting scenes related to life of Buddha

An architectural fragment; housed in the State Museum, Lucknow, belonging to the late Kuṣāṇa period in the CE 2nd century, is divided in to six horizontal bands and depicting the worship of turban of Siddhārth, Buddha meditating in Indraśāla cave and he has been visited by Indra, *dharma chakra pravartana* by Buddha, the victory over Māra in which he is depicted in *bhūmisparśamudrā*, (showing Gandhāra influence). The last figure of the panel shows Sūrya with lotus in the right hand a dagger in the left. His figure is shown behind the two horses running in the opposite directions.[15]

Some of the incidents from the Buddha's life had already been depicted in early art of Sanchi Bharhut and Mathura, but one can notice that the some of the scene is carved for the first time as the birth of Buddha, *Mahāparinirvāṇa* and first bath of Buddha by *nāgas.* A fragment from Mathura is **(Plate 7.3)** depicting the birth of Buddha, first bath of Buddha, enlightenment of Buddha, Buddha ascending to the *trayastiṁśa* heaven along with Brahma and Indra to preach his deceased mother, *dharma chakra pravartana* and *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of Buddha the all important scenes are depicted on a rectangular relief though they are not carved in a chronological order. The scene depicting Māyā standing under the tree in *Śālabhañjikā* posture giving birth to Buddha is carved at Mathura was a rare in the art of Śuṅga period instead scenes of Māyā's dream had been a favourite subject of sculptor. But due to the influence of Gandhāra art Buddha's birth scene is depicted at Mathura in a developed form. A relief from

Kauśāmbī also depicted the scene of the birth of Buddha, prior to this in early Śuṅga period in a very archaic manner, in which Māyā is shown standing under *Śāla* tree holding a branch of tree with a hand held akimbo. **(Plate 7.4a)** A winged lion pillar near to her is also depicted marking the Lumbini garden, where king Aśoka installed a pillar. A figure probably of a deity is standing with folded hands. The scene of birth of Buddha is rare in early art, whereas, the dream of Māyā was most favourite subject during Śuṅga period. The scene depicting Māyā's dream is rare in Mathura art and not even a single depiction of this scene had been found yet from Mathura. **(Plate 7.4b)**

Nāgas giving first bath to newly born Buddha **(Plate 7.5a)** and *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of Buddha are also depicted probably for the first time in Mathura art. **(Plate 7.5b)**

In *Lalitavistara*, it is mentioned that after the miraculous birth of Buddha has alighted, a great lotus emerged, piercing the earth. Two *nāga* kings, Nanda and Upananda, remaining with half their bodies showing from the sky, emitted two streams of water, cold and hot, and for bathing of Bodhisattva.[16]

Buddha descending from heaven *trayastriṁśa* remains the favourite subject of the sculptor of Sanchi, Bharhut and Mathura. At Sanchi exceptionally one ladder is depicted and Buddha is symbolically represented by *bodhi* tree. **(Plate 7.6a)** At Bharhut three ladders are depicted two each for Brahmā and Indra respectively who accompanied Buddha while coming down from heaven to earth after preaching *dhamma* to his deceased mother. Here, Buddha is symbolised by a foot print having a *chakra* symbol on the top step of ladder and one foot on the last step. At Mathura during CE 1st- 2nd century, this episode from the life of Buddha is depicted in different forms, as the Buddha is shown with Indra and Brahmā in anthropomorphic form on the either side of the ladder and on the top of the ladder Buddha is symbolised by his turban. **(Plate 7.6b)**

Carving of Bodhisattva figures in the Kuṣāṇa period

The prevalence of the Bodhisattva in the CE 2nd century is well established, as early Buddhist text *Sukhāvtī Vyūha Amitāyua Sūtra* which was translated into Chinese in the later half of the CE 2nd century refers to the tradition of Amitābha, one of the *Dhyānī* Buddhas.[17] Figures of Amitābh Buddha, (in the 26 year of Huviṣka)[18], Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi,[19] Dhyāni Buddha,[20] Vajrapāṇī[21] Maitreya with Garuḍa crown,[22] Kāśyap Buddha,[23] Bodhisattva in pensive mood[24] were also carved mainly in the later phase of Kuṣāṇa period. **(Plate 7.7b)**

In the Śuṅga period the depiction of the trees of previous Buddha's were popular and hence several depictions of trees of pervious Buddha were carved in Buddhist art of Sanchi and Bharhut. At Bharhut these depictions were carved with their respective labels. **(Plate 7.7a)**

Some of the depictions like that of stūpa of Rāmagrāma also remained a popular subject for carving. At Sanchi, Aśoka visiting the Rāmagrāma stūpa was carved elaborately and tastefully. **(Plate 7.8a)** (Refer chapter four for description) Whereas, at Mathura it was carved in a simpler form showing eight *nāgas* are tying a knot in front of the stūpa for its protection. It is imperative to mention that the stūpa depicted here is elongated in form. **(Plate 7.8b)**

Depiction of *Jātakas*

In depicting the *Jātaka* scenes the Mathura art of Kuṣāṇa period followed the earlier tradition of Sanchi and Bharhut. Number of new *Jātaka* were carved by the sculptor for example, Ulūk *Jātaka*[25] **(Plate 7.9b)** (GMM, No. J. 41), Romaka *Jātaka*[26] (GMM, No. I. 4), Mahasutasoma *Jātaka*[27] **(Plate 7.9a)** (GMM, No. J.23)[26], Dīpaṅkar *Jātaka*,[28] *Sisumar Jātaka*[28] (GMM, No. J. 42, 12. 195), Kachchhapa *Jātaka*,[29] and Vessantara *Jātaka*[30] etc.

In the Buddhist art of Sanchi; *Jātakas* were depicted in continuous, synoptic, and monoscenic mode of narration. Particularly at Sanchi, the art of depiction of *Jātaka* reached its culmination. Here sculptor had carved even minor details, very magnificently. Every important episode was carved by the sculptor; they were well versed of ivory carving. At Bharhut numbers of Jātaka scene were depicted in a very beautiful manner, though sculptors mainly carved them in monoscenic mode but some of the *Jātaka* for example Vidurapaṇḍita *Jātaka* was carved in continuous mode of narration. On the contrary; in the Śuṅga period at Mathura, carved *Jātakas* tales are few in number; some old *Jātaka* like Aśvamukhī and several new *Jātakas* for example, *Dukkhopadān* and Bāvāri *Jātaka*, were depicted probably for the first time. It seems that the sculptors were more

interested in carving of the figures of Buddha/Bodhisattva than the *Jātakas.*

Depiction of New Buddhist divinity

Besides the Buddha and Bodhisattva figures in different forms, the Mathura school of art also incorporated other divine and semi-divine figures in the Buddhist pantheon. Mention may be made of Kubera, Hārīti[31], Vajrapāṇi[32] etc.

Depiction of Auspicious symbols/other new motif

Auspicious symbols carved at Mathura include *triratna, swastika, nāgapuṣapa, śrīvatsa*, alms bowl, **(Plate 7.10a)** etc. Alms bowl, halo, conch shell with wings, are among the new auspicious motifs carved at Mathura. Symbolic worship of Stūpa, **((Plate 7.10.b)** turban **((Plate 7.10.c)** and alms bowl are also depicted in sculptural art. Copings are usually carved with a series of *chaitya* arches (ogee like arches) which is also a new and was a popular motif during this period. Mythical animals depicted on architectural members are more elongated and new in form at Mathura in Kuṣāṇa period.

Development of Stūpa Architecture

The fragmentary tympanum, *toraṇa* architrave and brackets have also been reported from Mathura. The tympanum fragment certainly belonged to the gates of shrine as their shape is much different from the stūpa gateways. These tympanums are carved on both sides, each divided by three arches, each emerging and ending at common points though running parallel to each other, into three cognate areas. As discussed in previous chapter, the centres on each face in all three arches are occupied by the sacred symbols like the model of *chaityas, bodhi* tree, alms bowl, turban, *dharmachakra*, etc. flanked by divine devotees. The end of the arch is occupied by *makaras* as in the Lomasa Ṛṣi cave facade of 3rd century BCE. The corner space is filled in by Garuḍa figure, which is a new motif in Mathura art and are rarely found in the Buddhist art of Sanchi and Bharhut.

The drum part of Stūpa also gradually started gaining more vertically elongation. An arch of transitional phase showing stūpa having three storied architecture and each stories consist of four gateways encircled by a railing. At Sanchi and Bharhut stūpa is a depicted of spherical/bulbous form with railing at lower and middle part and at the top of stūpa is an altar shaped *harmikā* surrounded by a railing.

The origin of the elongated form of these stūpa is largely a matter of speculation, It is well known that the stūpa of the 3rd, 2nd and 1st century BCE were by and large, hemispherical. It is, therefore, possible that elongation in the drum of the stūpa occurred during CE 1st century. **(Plate 7.11a, b)**

A number of votive stūpa have been brought to light. These are of immense help in forming an idea regarding the Buddhist stūpa. The drum was usually carved with Buddha images seated cross-legged in various *mudrās.* Some times the life scenes are depicted on the drum area.[33]

Depiction of *Śālabhañjikās*

At Bharhut railing pillars were carved with the simple depiction of *yakṣa* and *yakṣī* standing with folded hand or holding a branch of tree. Now at Mathura, this was entirely changed and the railing pillar were decorated by majestically carved *Śālabhañjikās* in various pose in which the damsel stands in *tribhaṅga* pose, plucking gently the branches of flowering trees like aśoka, champaka and kadaṁba. Other subjects included *Aśoka dohada, prasādhikā, śukrakrīḍa, Kaṅduka-krīdā, ghaṭakrīdā*, bathing under the water fall, drying her long hair by squeezing it after bath the dripping water is caught by swan to squelch thirst, lady taking wine **(Plate 7.12a, b, c, d)** etc.[34] S. P. Gupta expressed that these Kuṣāṇa secular images, deeply cut and prominently raised with rounded limbs now form a distinct idiom in the approach to art idiom differently, it was to please the human sensibility through voluptuousness of female forms by exhibiting the warmth of the flesh and dramatisation of events and situations by infusing animation in figures through various postures, profiles and facial expressions as well as arrangement of figures are more than one plane. Sitting, standing, running, talking, whispering, bending, the figures are now shown engaged in capturing an event as in the so-called *Mrichchhakaṭika* scene. Undercutting the figures and raising them high bring out in them the illusion of third dimension even though they still cling to the background. Poise and gaiety infuse the figure with model like qualities, perfection in body proportions and sensulism in the female figures." [35]

Summary

Buddhist art at Mathura had witnessed both symbolic and image worshiping prevailing side by side. The whole evolutionary process may be marked in the Mathura art, depiction of symbols, and appearance of tiny human figures of Buddha substituting symbols, notably shown figure of Buddha in anthropomorphic form.

The changes in Buddhist art witnessed serial wise changes owing to the demand of local as well as the customers from in and out side the territory of Mathura. As a result, gradually there was a change in Buddhist art, scholars like Coomaraswamy, Van Lohuizen de-Leeuw, V.S. Agrawala, E. B. Havel, Victor Golubew, Sten-Konow and R.C. Sharma favours Mathura for the origin of Buddha image. After examining the number of sculptures, it shows that Mathura was the place where aniconic form of Buddha changes in to iconic form. Initial figures of Buddha are archaic in nature. The developed form of Buddha/ Bodhisattva are found in Kuṣāṇa period viz. Maitreya and *Dhyāni* Buddha etc. Besides, metropolitan taste of Mathura, art lover resulted a number of sensuous, mundane sculptures which was probably never seen before in early Indian art. Many of the finest sculptures of India were created during the Kuṣāṇa period, in the first few centuries of the Christian era, and their style had a lasting impact on the entire subsequent evolution of Indian art.

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2. According to Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Bodhisattva is the ideal man, endowed with intellect and compassion. Even after attaining *nirvāṇa*, the Bodhisattva delays his ultimate *nirvāṇa* out of compassion to wards all, striving for *nirvāṇa* to be attained by all. He is prepared to take on the sins and sorrow of the world so that all creatures may attain *nirvāṇa*. Whereas, A Pratyekabuddha is a Buddha for himself alone, who has won enlightenment, but lives in solitude and does not reveal his enlightenment to the world. *Ibid.*, notes No. 2, p. 1.
3. Chaudhari, Suryanarayana, (trans. Sanskrit to Hindi), *Aśvaghoṣa Kṛata Saundrānanda Kāvya,* Sarg IV, Sanskrit Bhavana, Kathaotiya, Purniya, 1948, pp. 42-48.
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Conclusion

After the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of Buddha, the cult of stūpa appeared as an essential monument for Buddhists. The cult of stūpa became the centre for sculptural art in the later period. With the passage of time *vedikā, harmikā, chhatra, toraṇa,* middle *vedikā* and other architectural members were added to it. In the early phase only *śārīrika* stūpa were erected but later on *pāribhogika, uddéśika* and votive stūpa were also constructed, as the devotional faith on Buddhism increased among the mass. All kind of stūpa, whether, it was a relic stūpa, *pāribhogika* or *uddéśika* converted into the symbol of purity and the means for salvation/ *nirvāṇa.*

During the first two century after the Buddha's *nirvāṇa,* his creed could hardly be distinguished from other ascetic movements. It was during Aśokan period, that it emerged as a distinct religion with great potentiality. Emperor Aśoka started decorating the principal holy places of the Buddhists on a scale still unsurpassed.

The Aśokan pillars are embodiments of Buddhist ideas and are symbolic in nature, in the art of indirect representation in place of a direct portraiture; despite of the fact that some of these animals find an honored place in myths and legends of other religions, they were no less venerated by the Buddhists, as apparent from their mythology.

It is indeed, striking to note that all of them are associated with Buddha. The life events of Buddha were translated into stone by Aśoka and his artistic originality was copied in the later sculptures of Bharhut, Sanchi and Amaravati. Stone was a substitute for wood in structural art; imitation of wood carving into stone can be very well seen in the faṛade of the Lomas Ṛṣi cave as well as at Bhaja and Karle caves etc. It may be regarded as true precursor of Śuṅga art. Buddhist art assumed a form a grandeur not known before. Actually, the Buddhist art begins from this period to reach in new horizon in Śuṅga period. Buddhist art of this period expresses the power and majesty that was not seen in the past.

Aśoka with his hard efforts gave the new idioms to Buddhism. He was able to reach his goal by spreading the Buddhism and Buddhist art in every corner of his country and out side. The earliest remains at Sarnath i.e. Lion capital proves to be a mile stone for the successful and gigantic symbolic depiction of the first sermon of the Buddha. Likewise, *Vajrāsana* at Bodhgaya conveys the ideas of symbolic representation of enlightenment of Buddha under the *bodhi* tree.

The Bharhut reliefs are generally accompanied by contemporary descriptive inscriptions. Here Buddha is absent, but his presence is shown through the symbolic depiction in form of *bodhimaṇḍa, chhatra, chakra, charaṇa* etc. On the other hand, in all *jātaka* scenes Buddha is visibly represented. The general appearance of the richly sculptured pillars, crossbars and coping stones of the Bharhut railing is more lavish, than the railing of stūpa II at Sanchi, for the Bharhut railing bears a carved design on every element of its structure i.e. on *toraṇa* pillar, railing, railing pillars, coping and *sūchī.*

During the Suṅga period the sculptures mainly decorated the railings of the stūpas. These sculptures depict *jātaka* legends, Buddha's life-scenes, plants, trees, birds, animals, fabulous creatures, human figures, building architecture etc.

The sculptural art evidences from early sites like Sanchi stūpa No. II, Bharhut indicates that Buddhist followers

started worshiping *nāga* and *yakṣa* and that these deities played an important role within the local Buddhist tradition. The Bharhut railing is carved with *yakṣa* figures, from the *nāga* chakravāka scene at the entrance of the stūpa. It is interesting to observe that the community of worshipers represented in the Bharhut reliefs consists of laymen; gods flying celestial, but never the monks. Only at one depiction at Bharhut a figure of monk is depicted.

Among the recurrent motifs in the rich ornamentation by peacock, elephant worshiping *vūkṣa chaitya* or stūpa, stūpa being worshiped by the devotees (human beings, divinities and semi divinities, and wild animals as well), *chakra*, full vase, (*bhadra ghaṭa*) and Gaja Lakṣmī in sitting as well as in standing posture venerated by the elephants from both the side were very popular at Bharhut.

In several scenes of the depiction of life-episodes of the Buddha at Bharhut, some palm-prints appear in relief, normally on the pedestal. In one of the scenes four palm-prints are shown in front of the pedestal on which is placed the dish containing the locks of hair of Buddha. Similar, palm prints are also noticed in the same position in another scene depicting the descent of Buddha. Another Bharhut sculpture shows the foot prints of the Buddha marked with *dharmachakra* on a highly stylised empty throne decorated with three five-prints under an umbrella. The depiction of hand prints on *āsana* or stūpa is not seen in any other Buddhist sites (a very few such scenes are seen in Mathura and at Katar, Musanagar in U.P.) it is a unique representation in Bharhut sculptural art. It may probably be the result of folk culture.

Most of the Bharhut reliefs indicating the presence of the Buddha do not emphasize the narrative content of the story. The Bharhut sculptors seem to have opted for monoscenic representation of the Buddha's life. Only one episode from the life of Buddha i.e. great departure is carved in a continuous mode of narration.

Variety of *jātkas* is depicted, especially on the coping stones with labels suggesting that *Jātakas* were very deep rooted in the contemporary society.

Bharhut represents nearly a primitive phase in classical Indian art. In spite of the relation, that exists among the different forms within a composition the single figures, the main actors of the stories, appear to be unaware of the parts that they were to play in the scenes and hence were depicted without expressions. They simply exist and by there mere existence to fulfil the need of the story as depicted.

Indian art and culture have a long legacy or history and they were deeply inspired by old myths, usages, and beliefs, besides religious ideas which were propounded by thinkers of various schools and sects, which are clearly reflected in the art of Bharhut. One of the remarkable aspects of early Buddhist art is that the focus was not on individuals. The railings of Bharhut have the earliest known representations of the "*Jātaka*", stories of Buddha related to his previous lives, in the form of different men and as animals.

One of most marvelous aspects of early Buddhist art is the portrayal of fine ethical qualities in the world of animals, often missing even in men. In the Mahākapi *Jātaka*, roundel depicts the story of the Buddha, when he was born as a virtuous monkey, the "Mahākapi *Jātaka*". Many incidents of the story are shown very skillfully in a short space. The stories are depicted in a continuous narration, in which the same figure appears several times.

Though, Buddha was not represented in figure in early Buddhist art, He is considered as divine being or *bhagavān*. In the inscription at Bharhut the Buddha is designated as *bhagavat*, divine being or adorable *bhagavān*, the expressions *bhagavato ūkramti, bhagavato sakamunino Bodho, Bhagavato Dhamachkam, Bhagavato Vipsino Bodhi* etc., clearly prove this fact. It further creates a base for the cult forming ideology.

It appears that a section of the ancient Buddhists commonly felt the need to have the representation of Buddha in human form at least by the 2nd century BCE onwards, if not earlier. An early attempt in this direction was the introduction of Buddha-*pādas*. The early Buddhist art suggests the presence of the master in human form.

The next stage of Buddhist art is marked by the sculptural art at Sanchi stūpa No.I. Here it attains refinement in the treatment of figures, and improves figural arrangement with fewer carvings on the railings unlike Bharhut. By this time the figure of *śālabhanjikās* became more delightful.

The carvings are no longer flat, as most of the reliefs as seen at Bharhut, but they are projected, and being carved

in high relief. The sculptors of Sanchi gave more attention in carving the minute details. Unlike the Sanchi stūpa No.II, which carried its sculptures, carved on the railing; or Bharhut, which had its sculptures carved on the railing and *toraṇa*, coping and *sūchī* the railing, *sūchī*, coping of the Sanchi Stūpa No. I are left uncarved; But the four *toraṇas* of Sanchi stūpa No. I are profusely carved. At Bharhut in rectangular composition, sculptors mainly made a border of palm tree with its beautiful leaves, and fluted pillar with Kumrahār type pillar capital. At Sanchi, sculptors carved designs of flowers and creepers in boarder, fluted pillar with animals sitting back to back or *paśu saṅghāṭa* (as we found in western caves), pillar with *ghaṭa* shaped base.

Sculptures of God Kāma are rare in early Indian sculptures. Scholars on Brahmanical iconography and mythology, for example T.A. Gopinatha Rao, P. Thomas, J. N. Banerjea, Alain Danielou, D. N. Shukla, N. P. Joshi and others make no mention of any independent figural representation of this god in early sculpture. At Bharhut only at one place, Māra is depicted in grief scratching the surface with a pointed stick, But whereas at Sanchi, Māra with his army is depicted in a very elaborate manner. In one place on an architrave, where Buddha is depicted renouncing the worldly life, on similar architrave corner side near the scroll is attested by Māra as Kāma and his wife Rati, carved in for the first time. Kāma is holding arrows and Rati is holding bow. Beholding each other hands, they are beautifully depicted. Due to the presence in forest, the elephants are crazy and destroying tress in excitement.

Marshall has identified them as forest people, but to us the couple is none other then Kāma and Rati in cheerful manner, wearing crown and jewelry, floral bow is held by Rati, Kāma is having arrows five in numbers (*pañchaśara*). The bow held by Rati is floral. It is imperative to mention here that Kāma is popularly known as Māra or Pāpimā (the "wicked one") in the Buddhist texts, he is closely associated with the god of desire and love, Kāma. A plague from Sonkh dated post Śuṅga to pre Kuṣāṇa period depicts the same god holding bunch of five arrows in the right hand. It can be narrated here that, God Kāma is shown with Rati holding arrows in one hand.

The *Jātakas* stories represent the episodes from the life of the Buddha and other Buddhist events. The scenes are carved on the architraves, As the sculptors had more horizontal space for carving. Jambs of the *toraṇas* in rectangular partitions have been provided with sufficient space for the carver to depict narrations elaborately. Sufficient surface for carving proved to be more suitable for continuous narration, than the round medallions as can be seen at Bharhut.

The stories are depicted in easy and cheerful manner with all the minute details recorded therein. The inclinations of artists were centered on the details of the material world. There is nothing in contemporary lives that were escaped from their observations, from the life of the court, with its festive and military pageants, in palaces and fortified cities, down to the humble country life with its simple occupation and huts.

The representation of the individual figures shows the progress over the Bharhut sculptural art. The different parts of the human body form are more harmonious entity, and the movements are more natural. At Sanchi, there is a definite advance in sculptural technique and treatment over that of Bharhut, variation in date, style, and iconography may be easily observed.

The proportion of the figures at Sanchi is still heavy. It is very much later at Amaravati that the figures are light and graceful in shape.

Yakṣa the guardians of the gateway are large in scale, recall similar ones at Bharhut. At Sanchi occurs the motif of the *yakṣa* with a lotus issuing from his naval, a motif that survived for several centuries with splendid examples in Gupta art.

The graceful and elaborate foliage and flower designs remind us the art of ivory carvers. Here it may be mentioned that in the sculptural art of Sanchi, Mathura and Bodhgaya the western influence can be seen in the carvings of animals, mythical animals, and decorative motifs, but not on the facial and anatomical features of human beings. In short the western art could affect only decorative motifs and animals. Carvings of men and women figures remained unaffected.

Sanchi sculptor carved the life scenes of Buddha with other related subjects on the *toraṇa* pillars in square reliefs, separated by railing design and on architraves.

At Sanchi sculptors have given more stress on carving of Buddha's life incidents rather than depicting the *Jātaka's*

like at the Bharhut stūpa. More over the popular kings who gave the patronage to Buddhism also are duly depicted.

Application of floral motifs and creepers in stylised manner was the great achievement of the Sanchi sculptors. Lotus flowers were carved for the first time in a deep carving method on the lower side of architraves. Creepers are diligently carved to fill up the gaps, in a very sophisticated manner, compared to the Bharhut sculptures. Sanchi sculptures were depicted with wearing less jewelry; especially the necklace wore by the men and women are reduced from three strings to one string.

Buddhist art of Mathura during the Śuṅga period shows that sculptures were carved in low relief. Female and male figures elaborately bejewelled; and their garments are apparently heavy and sculptures do not reflects any emotions/facial expression. Like Bharhut the sculptures shows heavy coiffure. Buddha was still represented by symbols, but some more symbols were added i.e. the halo or Buddha's *prabhā-maṇḍala* and *bhikṣā pātra* in later period.

The size of the gateways, of the horizontal architraves and of the upright posts were much reduced at Mathura, though some specimens still show the continuation of previous trends of making bigger size railing and cross bars. Not a single stūpa belonging to this period has been discovered at Mathura, but the sculptures prove that Buddhist and Jain stūpas co-existed at Mathura.

Scenes from the *Jātakas*, on the other hand, are scarce. Some *Jātakas* were depicted probably for the first time such as *Dukkhopāḍāṇ Jātaka*. Some popular *Jātaka* were also depicted viz. Assamukhī *Jātaka*. *Jātakas* were depicted in 'monoscenic mode' of narration.

The sizes of the gateways of the horizontal architraves and of the upright posts were reduced in size at Mathura as stated above. There is only one example of a bigger size railing upright and a couple of Śuṅga cross-bars; the one showing an elephant with riders in a medallion and the other with beautiful head wearing conspicuous head-dress. Merlon, lotus medallion, rows of bell on coping stone, human face carved inside the lotus medallion are some of the features are similar as found in Bharhut sculptural art. There is not much difference in the art of Sanchi and Bharhut and that as found at the Mathura.

Early Buddhist art is aniconic and only in this period the Buddha appears in iconic form in late 1st century BCE or early CE 1st century. It is one of the main characteristics features of the Mathura school of art; that it took the initiative to transform symbols into figure of Buddha. Initially, it was carved small in size, having affinity with the *Jina* figures, but later on independent and big statue of Buddha/ Bodhisattva were carved in more developed form.

After studying all these sculptures it may be said that, during this period of transition at Mathura the Jainism was also popular like Buddhism. Number of Jain antiquities and sculptures unearthed during excavations from Kankali Tila shows that, Jain art was also developed. The *āyāgapaṭṭas* are remarkable art objects of this phase. Later on only at Amaravati Buddhist also carved *āyāgapaṭṭas*.

Great achievement of Buddhist art during this period was the emergence of iconic figure of the Buddha.

The basic elements of the Buddhist icons viz. *padmāsana*, *dhyānamudrā*, *nāsāgradṛṣḥi simhāsana*, *chamargrāhini* celestials showering flowers *ūrṇā*, *uṣṇīsa* etc., shows the Indian concept of *yogī* and *chakravartin* which is deeply rooted in Indian culture and the figure of Buddha was the outcome of this idea.

In the transitional phase, the mythical animals influenced by the western art are depicted in more elongated form. It seems that the Chinese art also had connections with the Indian art and for the first time we get the legs of *mahoraga* as dragon shaped. *Makaras* which were essentially carved in the end part of architrave is now replaced by the winged *makara* with face of a human. It is due to the western art influence, in the transitional phase that grape wine became favourite subject of sculptors to decorate the sculptures especially for making the border.

In the transitional phase the architraves of *toraṇas* becomes straight. One may remember that at Sanchi and Bharhut the architraves are slightly in arched form. Even the architrave belong to the Śuṅga period recovered from Mathura have slightly arched shape.

Due the constant interaction and contacts with the foreigners the art of transitional phase had probably some inspiration from the western art. In a Buddhist tympanum, in the triangular corner is a depiction of eagle which was the favourite bird in the Persian art for a long time before

the Christian era. But shortly, it was carved holding snakes in its beak in the form of Garuḍa, giving a mythological background and subject matter to the depiction in Indian art, rather than just decorative nature of depiction.

Gaja Lakṣmi was one of the favourite deities in the early Buddhist art. She had been depicted at Sanchi, Bodhgaya, Bharhut, Pitalkhora, Bhaja and several other early Buddhist sites, whereas her depiction is rare in the art of Mathura. Though some of the coins of Kṣatrpa kings depicted the Goddess Lakṣmī, but in sculptural art she is almost absent. During the Kaniṣka period she had been depicted as standing on lotus, pressing her breast as a symbol of fertility, but her Gaja Lakṣmī form is absent.

In the transitional phase life scenes of Buddha became more popular though *Jātakas* were also being carved by the sculptors, but in a restricted number. The Buddhist art was glorified by the anthropomorphic form of Buddha. Some of the *Jātakas* were carved on pillar railing in continuous narrative mode for example Ṛśyaśṛṇga *Jātaka.*

A lot of changes occurred in style and form of drapery. It seems bellowing scarf or *uttariya* becomes popular among the elite class of society. It was a long unstitched cloth covering both the shoulder. Probably made of fine cotton as the area Mathura was known for the production of cotton in the ancient times. Jewellery carved in sculptures is less in number and light in weight as compared to the Śuṅga period. Female figures are shown with distinctive type of round and heavy anklets. Male figure in some instance are shown with more ornamented *uṣṇīṣa.* Some of the figure depicts combed hair on their back side. The girdles were also shown more decorative than the earlier period. Bellowing scarf was popular among both females and males. Female figures are shown draped in thin dhoti and long fillets falling between the legs now almost disappears or becomes short, comparatively to the female figures of earlier period.

At Mathura, during the transitional phase new subjects became popular. Coping stone were being carved with social scenes like the scene of garden. Inscriptions of the time of Śoḍāṣa inform us that garden, ponds and wells were constructed as charity. Social scenes became popular. In these coping two persons are shown sitting in a garden surrounded by a wall having fencing of criss-cross design. Garden is depicted with a number of tress including banana. Banana trees also became a favourite subject for sculptors. Merlon and lotus buds were now replaced by heavy garland, grape vine and atlantes.

During the period of Kaniṣka the figure of Buddha/ Bodhisattva, *Jātakas*, scenes from the life of Buddha viz. birth of Buddha and Buddha's descent from heaven at Saṁkāśya etc., symbolic worship, sacred symbols, mundane scenes, figures of *śālabhañjikā,* were now carved in a new art style. Sculptures based on the popular text of contemporary period were also carved.

During the kingship of Kaniṣka at Mathura and later especially, from the time of Huviṣka and Vāsudeva Gandhara art influenced Mathura in various ways. New rulers, new environment and new traditions appeared. This caused a great change in Mathura art during Kuṣāṇa period. During this period Mathura witnessed the golden days of its sculptural art, which produced beautiful and realistic sculptures. Sculptors produced thousands of sculptures to fulfil the demands from the distant places.

Standing figures of Buddha/Bodhisattva carved during this period bear some distinct features compared to the early standing figure belonging to the transitional phase. These characteristic features includes; the large halo, if survived, having scalloped border, left hand is held akimbo, chest is broad, the drapery is same as seen in the seated figures, a waist band fastening the lower garment, the lower garment reaches below the knee. A bunch of flowers is usually seen between the two legs. Sometimes it is replaced by a lion. The gap between the right hand (which is in *abhaya mudrā*) and chest is filled with a floral design up to the chest to give strength to the upraised hand.

Seated figures of Buddha produced by the sculptor during this period are in advanced stage of perfection, as they were carved in high relief, but not carved in round, features are effective and expressive, the halo are being carved having scalloped boarder, on the back of the statues the carving of pipal tree is clear and beautifully depicted with leafs, The upper two corners are carved with flying celestials holding garlands in their hands, earlobes of the figures are not so elongated as it found in the later phase of Kuṣāṇa art, navel is deeply carved, eyes are wide open, between the eyebrows is seen an *ūrṇa* mark, smiling face. The figure is flanked by an acolyte on each side, carrying flywhisk, the top hair on the head of the Buddha is shaped

like a snail shell (*kaparḍa*), the right hand is raised in *abhaya mudrā*, reaching above the shoulders and profile in position, left part of body is covered by garment and left arm shows thick and heavy pleats, lower part of the legs is not covered, the frills of the garment falls on the seat, chest is broad and stiff, seat is shaped as an altar and usually carved with the lions in profile on either corners. The pedestal supported by lions considered to be of Scythian origin.

Some of the incidents from the Buddha's life already had been depicted in early art of Sanchi, Bharhut and Mathura, but one can notice that some of the scene were carved for the first time as the birth of Buddha, *Mahāprinirvāṇa* and first bath of Buddha by *nāgas*. The scene depicting Māyā standing under the tree in *Śālabhañjika* posture giving birth to Buddha is carved at Mathura was a rare in the art of Śuṅga period. The scenes of Māyā's dream had been a favourite subject of sculptors. But, due to the influence of Gandhara art Buddha's birth scene is depicted at Mathura in a developed form. The scene of birth of Buddha is rare in early art, where as the dream of Māyā was most favourite subject during Śuṅga period.

During this period a large number of Bodhisattva figures such as Amitābh Buddha, Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi, Vajrapāṇī, Maitreya with Garuḍa crown, Kāśyap Buddha and Bodhisattva in pensive mood etc. were produced The Mathura school of art also incorporated other divine and semi-divine figures in the Buddhist pantheon. Mention may be made of Kubera, Hārīti, Vajrapāṇi etc.

In depicting the *Jātaka* scenes the Mathura art of Kuṣāṇa period followed the earlier tradition of Sanchi and Bharhut. Number of *Jātakas* were carved by the sculptor for example, Ulūk *Jātaka* , Romaka *Jātaka*, Mahasutasoma *Jātaka*, Dīpaṅkar *Jātaka*, Sisumar *Jātaka* , Kachchhapa *Jātaka*, and Vessantara *Jātaka* etc.

It may be mentioned here that the sculptors had not given due attention to the caring of *Jātaka* scenes. They were more inclined to carve the figures of Buddha and Bodhisattvas in seated and standing forms. The *Jātaka* scenes were carved in monoscenic mode of narration.

Auspicious symbols carved at Mathura include *triratna, swastika, nāgapuśapa, śrīvatsa*, alms bowl, etc. Alms bowl, halo and conch shell with wings, are among the new auspicious motifs carved at Mathura. Copings are usually carved with a series of *chaitya* arches (ogee like arches) which is also a new and popular motif during this period. Mythical animal depicted on architectural member is more elongated and depicted in a new form at Mathura during Kuṣāṇa period.

Stūpa architecture had also become more vertically raised. An arch of transitional phase showing stūpa having three storied architecture and each stories consist of four gateways encircled by a railing.

A number of votive stūpa have been brought to light. These are of immense help in forming an idea regarding the Buddhist stūpa. The drum was usually carved with Buddha images seated cross-legged in various *mudrās*. In some cases the life scenes are depicted on the drum area.

At Bharhut railing pillars were carved with simple depiction of *yakṣa* and *yakṣī* standing with folded hands or holding a branch of tree. At Mathura, this was entirely different the railing pillars were decorated by majestically carved *Śālabhañjikas* in various pose.

Here, it may be summarised that in the beginning of Buddhist art Buddha was represented in form of stūpa, and gradually it took the form of symbolic depiction of Buddha in monumental pillars erected by king Aśoka. Later on Buddhist art was transformed in the form of symbolic depiction related to Buddha's life scenes, *Jātakas* and other popular deities were having the subordinated position as compared to Buddha, as depicted at Sanchi, Bharhut and other contemporary sites. During the beginning of the Christian era the Buddha is depicted in physical form in the Buddhist art. And later on during the CE 2nd century several other deities and divinities also acquired physical form at Mathura, side by side the Buddha and Bodhisattva figures were also being carved in more developed form. It was this development in art of the Kuṣāṇa period which paved the way to the Buddhist art of Gupta period reach to its climax in the Sarnath school where the softness in physical forms combined with compassionate and spiritual appearance of Buddha's face and body made Indian Buddhist sculptural art non-comparable and unparalleled in the art of the world.

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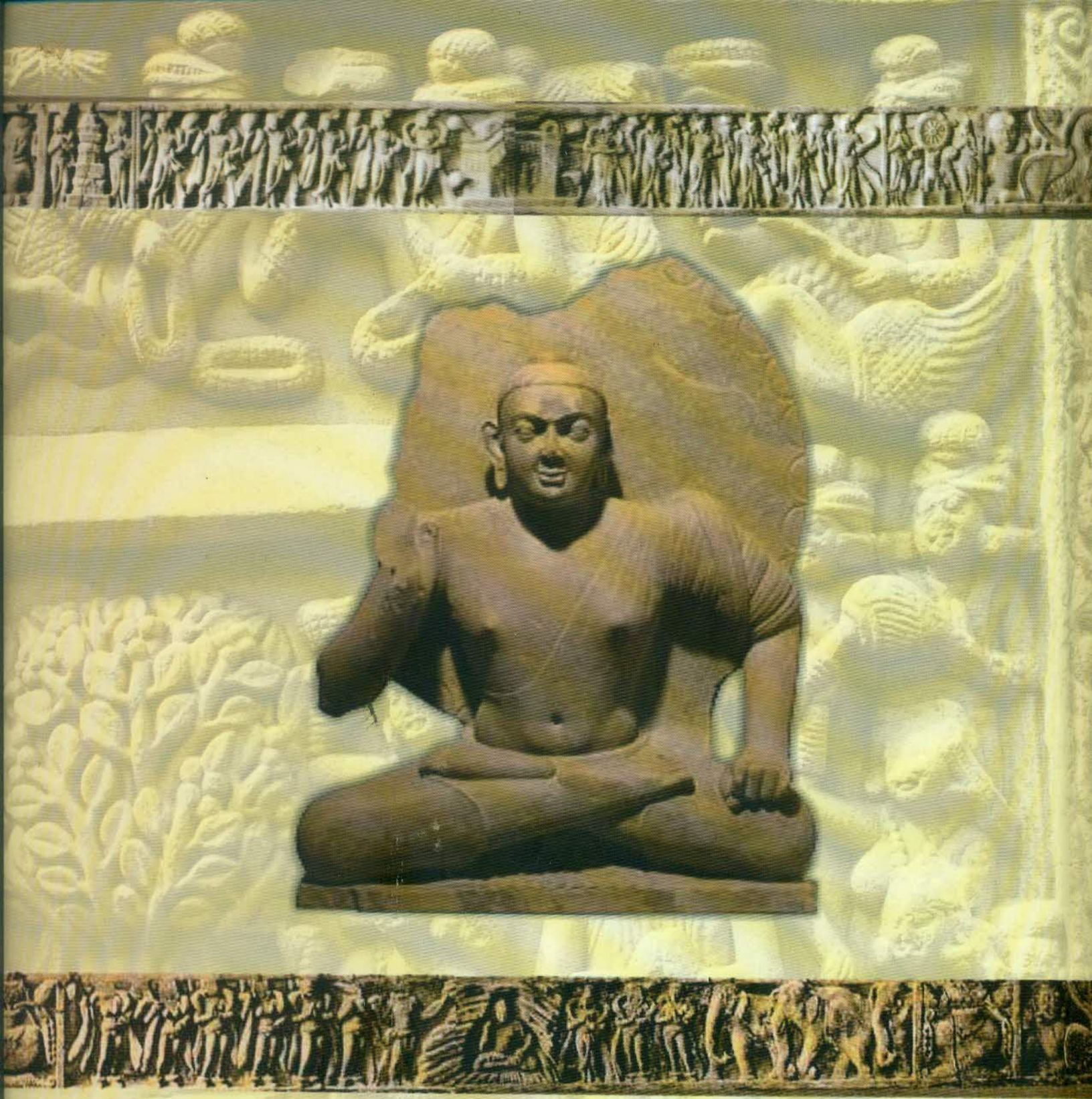

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